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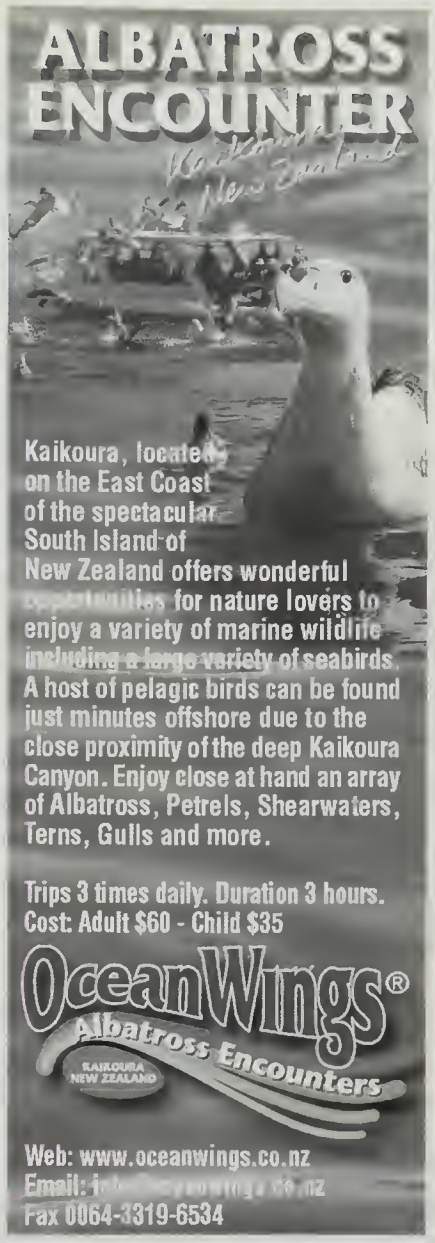
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Reversing the declines of farmland birds:

a practical demonstration

Chris Stoate



Robert Gillmor

ABSTRACT Numbers of breeding birds declined on farmland during the late 1970s and 1980s. The development of a management system for wild gamebirds, and its integration into a viable farming system at Loddington, Leicestershire, since 1993, have resulted in an increase of 102% in abundance of a community of nationally declining songbird species, effectively reversing their former decline. A private/public partnership, combining farmers' own incentives with state-funded agri-environment measures, could be expanded to enable farmers to apply this, or similar management systems, more widely, in order to reverse the decline of farmland bird populations.

Introduction

The dramatic decline in bird numbers on farmland during the latter part of the twentieth century is now well documented and widely recognised. Recorded losses on farmland have been greater than those in other habitats. Many of the species concerned, including Sky Lark *Alauda arvensis*, Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, Linnet *Carduelis cannabina* and Tree Sparrow *Passer montanus*, have been accorded Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) status, and have now become the subject of targeted conservation measures. The plight of declining populations of common birds has been recognised by Government, which now includes bird

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abundance as one of its 'quality of life' indicators, and has set targets for reversing these declines (Gregory *et al.* 2000). Reversing the declines in farmland bird populations is, however, an ambitious objective. Conservation measures directed at individual species, in defined geographical areas, have had some success, as demonstrated for Cirl Buntings *Emberiza cirlus* in Devon and for Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedicnemus* in East Anglia (Aebischer *et al.* 2000). Different species may, however, have very different requirements, which is apparent from the two examples just quoted, and effective reversal of the decline of a farmland bird community has not previously been demonstrated.

For most species, the causes of their decline, and the action required to reverse it, are poorly understood. Nevertheless, there are some changes in farming practice which have been implicated in the declines of many species. For example, the geographical polarisation of arable and livestock systems has resulted in simplified environments, in which the diversity of habitats available to birds has been reduced. The withdrawal of livestock from arable systems also removes sources of winter food both at field feeding sites and in stockyards. More efficient storage of harvested crops also diminishes the amount of food available for seed-eaters. On light soils, a switch from spring to autumn sowing has reduced the area of winter stubbles, and the increased efficacy of modern herbicides reduces the abundance of seeding weeds in any stubbles that survive. All of these changes may influence the winter survival of birds, and this is thought to have contributed to the population declines of some species (Peach *et al.* 1999; Siriwardena *et al.* 1999).

In the breeding season, the loss of habitat, especially hedges and associated field-boundary vegetation, has had a direct influence on breeding abundance. Destruction of arable weeds, and the invertebrates which they support, has removed an important source of food for nestlings of both granivorous and insectivorous species. Such losses are an inevitable consequence of improved herbicides and broad-spectrum insecticides. Abandonment of some farming methods, such as undersowing grass into cereals, has removed from the arable ecosystem many invertebrates, such as sawflies (Symphyta), which are important food for birds. For some bird species, increased numbers of predators, such as crows (Corvidae), may have contributed to the decline, especially where habitat structure has also changed. Deterioration of the *quality* of breeding habitats has just as much influence on breeding-bird abundance as does the reduction in habitat quantity.

Reversing the decline in bird numbers on farmland may, therefore, require very substantial changes to farming systems. Such changes do not necessarily require a return to previous farming methods, but could incorporate new management practices designed specifically to benefit birds. These practices must, however, be paid for, whether by Government or by farmers themselves. Agri-environment schemes are one mechanism for providing financial incentives for farmers to adopt appropriate management, but the interests of the particular farmers are likely to have a major influence on whether they enter these schemes, and, if having done so, how well they carry out the management. While few farmers are sufficiently interested in songbirds to undertake conservation measures for those species alone, many farmers have shooting interests and already carry out some management on their farms to benefit Common Pheasants *Phasianus colchicus* and other game. Pheasants use a wide range of habitats through the year, for example making considerable use of arable crops in the breeding season, and more use of woodland in winter. Habitat management for game must accommodate these requirements, which may in turn benefit declining songbird species.

Loddington

The implications of game management for declining songbirds on farmland have been investigated at Loddington, a 333-ha mixed arable and livestock farm in Leicestershire. The farm is owned and managed by the Allerton Research and Educational Trust, and the research and demonstration work there is run in partnership with The Game Conservancy Trust, a national wildlife research and conservation organisation.

The farm is managed primarily as a viable business, but secondary objectives are to

adapt the farming system to meet the ecological requirements of wild pheasants for shooting (Boatman & Brockless 1998; Boatman & Stoate 2000), and to research the interactions between the farming system and game and other wildlife. No artificially reared pheasants are released at Loddington. The dependence on a wild pheasant population means, therefore, that the whole range of that species' requirements must be met throughout the year. These include the provision of nesting habitats, insect-rich foraging habitats for the newly hatched chicks, and food and cover during the autumn and winter. To ensure that enough pheasant eggs hatch to justify the habitat management, nest predators (Carrion Crows *Corvus corone*, Magpies *Pica pica*, Common Rats *Rattus norvegicus*, Red Foxes *Vulpes vulpes*, Stoats *Mustela erminea* and Weasels *M. nivalis*) are controlled during the nesting season (Tapper *et al.* 1996). The nesting success of some species, such as Song Thrush, is improved as a result (Stoate & Thomson 2000). Predator control is an intensive activity during the nesting season, with approximately 200 spring traps and 20 Larsen traps (cage traps for corvids) being checked daily at Loddington.

Grain is provided for pheasants in the woods and along hedgerows throughout the winter and into the spring, in order for the birds to maintain winter body condition (Draycott *et al.* 1998). This supplementary food is also used by other birds, including nationally declining species such as Yellowhammers *E. citrinella* and Tree Sparrows (Stoate & Szczur 1997).

Habitat management

Pheasants nest in a wide range of habitats on farmland, one of these being perennial herbaceous vegetation at field boundaries. On most farms, this habitat has been lost because of misdirected herbicides and fertilisers, ploughing into the hedge base, and the direct application of herbicides to field-boundary vegetation (Boatman 1992). Perennial grasses have, therefore, been restored in field boundaries at Loddington. The same vegetation is used not only by gamebirds, but also by a wide range of invertebrates, including many which control crop pests, and others which provide food for pheasants and other bird species. It is also used as nesting habitat by some songbirds, and is sufficiently important to Common Whitethroats *Sylvia communis* and Yellowhammers that it



Chris Stoate

180. Farmland at Loddington, Leicestershire, May 1999. Cereal-based (foreground) and kale-based (background) crop mixtures provide insect-rich foraging areas for birds in summer, and an abundant source of seed food in winter.



Chris Stoate

181. Farmland at Loddington, Leicestershire, August 1996. A mixture of kale and quinoa (a South American crop, *Chenopodium quinoa*) provides seed food and cover for gamebirds and other farmland bird species, such as Linnets *Carduelis cannabina* (plate 182).

determines whether or not they are present at field boundaries (Stoate & Szczur 2001).

The use of pesticides is restricted on the outer edge of most cereal fields, so that some weeds and invertebrates are present in field edges as food for pheasant chicks and for other breeding birds. This idea was originally developed by The Game Conservancy Trust in the 1980s, and such strips have become known as 'conservation headlands'. While they have minimal impact on crop yield if managed appropriately, they provide an abundance of invertebrate food (Sotherton 1991; Boatman *et al.* 1999). The farm is also very careful to use only target-specific aphicides, and to use these only when aphid numbers have reached predetermined threshold levels.

Wintering habitats for beneficial species of beetle (Carabidae and Staphylinidae) are created through the centre of large fields so that predatory beetles can be used to control aphids, reducing the need for insecticides (Thomas *et al.* 1991). These 'beetle banks' take the form of low, grassy banks about 2 m wide, and provide a mid-field refuge for other wildlife, such as Harvest Mice *Micromys minutus* (Bence *et al.* 1999) and other small mammals, and for Sky Larks.

Perhaps the greatest change to the cropping system is the use of set-aside land. Instead of having whole fields in set-aside, strips are positioned through the centre of the largest fields, and along the edges of others. Wherever possible, different crops are



Robin Chittenden

182. Linnet *Carduelis cannabina*, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, October 1996.



Chris Stoate

183. Woodland at Loddington, Leicestershire, June 2000. Shrubs and herbaceous vegetation in woods provide winter cover and early-season nesting sites for Common Pheasants *Phasianus colchicus*, but also create breeding habitat for other species, such as Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Blackcap *Sylvia atricapilla* and Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*.

grown on each side of the mid-field strip. As a result, field size is effectively reduced, and crops are more evenly distributed around the farm, so that a greater range of crops is within easy reach of individual pheasant territories than would otherwise be the case (Boatman & Brockless 1998). Stoate *et al.* (1998) have shown that, during the course of the breeding season, Yellowhammers at Loddington switch from foraging in Rape *Brassica napus* fields to foraging in barley, and then in wheat. If all three crops are available within an individual Yellowhammer's foraging range, the effective foraging period is likely to be longer for that individual than is the case if only one crop is available.



Robin Chittenden

184. Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, Isles of Scilly, June 1995. The breeding population of Song Thrushes at Loddington, Leicestershire, recovered dramatically after the adoption of the game-management system in 1993 (see text for details).

Set-aside strips are actively managed for pheasants by the planting of unharvested crops, as permitted by the 'Wild Bird Cover' option of the set-aside scheme. Some of these crops are cereal-based mixtures, which provide insect-rich foraging areas for pheasant broods in summer. Others are kale-based mixtures, which provide winter cover and incorporate annual seed-bearing plants, supplying food for pheasants and other birds in winter. The kale itself flowers and produces seed in the second year, and this represents a major food source for passerines, including BAP species such as Linnet and Reed Bunting *E. schoeniclus* (Boatman *et al.* 2000).

Woodlands are also managed to produce a shrub layer that provides cover for pheasants in winter (Hill & Robertson 1988). In the summer, this habitat structure is also attractive to other species, such as Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*.

Conservation benefits

Songbird numbers have been monitored at Loddington since the start of the project, in 1992. The first year was used as a baseline, to establish the population levels and distribution of bird species on the farm, and changes in habitat management were not introduced until the following year. Transects covering both farmland and woodland provide an annual index of abundance, while intensive territory-mapping was also carried out in 1992 and 1998.

Long-term monitoring on a nearby farm, carried out by the Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society using CBC (territory-mapping) methodology, confirms that songbirds have declined on farmland in this area in much the same way as they have throughout Britain. The nationally declining species present both at Loddington and at the other local farm include BAP species such as Sky Lark, Song Thrush, Linnet and Common Bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, as well as other species which have suffered less severe, but nonetheless sustained, population declines since the 1970s (Crick *et al.* 1997).

Fig. 1 illustrates the decline in this group of species at the local farm since the late 1970s. While bird numbers there have remained relatively stable during the 1990s, there has been a substantial increase in populations of the same species at Loddington during the management period, effectively reversing the decline of the previous 15 years. Total breeding abundance at Loddington was 102% higher in the 1995-97 period than in 1992. The component species (and the mean annual percentage change at Loddington) were: Sky Lark (-3), Hedge Accentor *Prunella modularis* (+8), Blackbird *T. merula* (+10), Song Thrush (+16), Willow Warbler (+16), Linnet (+20), Common Bullfinch (+6) and Yellowhammer (-1) (Stoate in press). Although numbers of Sky Larks and Yellowhammers did not increase over this period, these are among the species which are present in higher densities at Loddington than on neighbouring farmland (Stoate & Szczur in press).

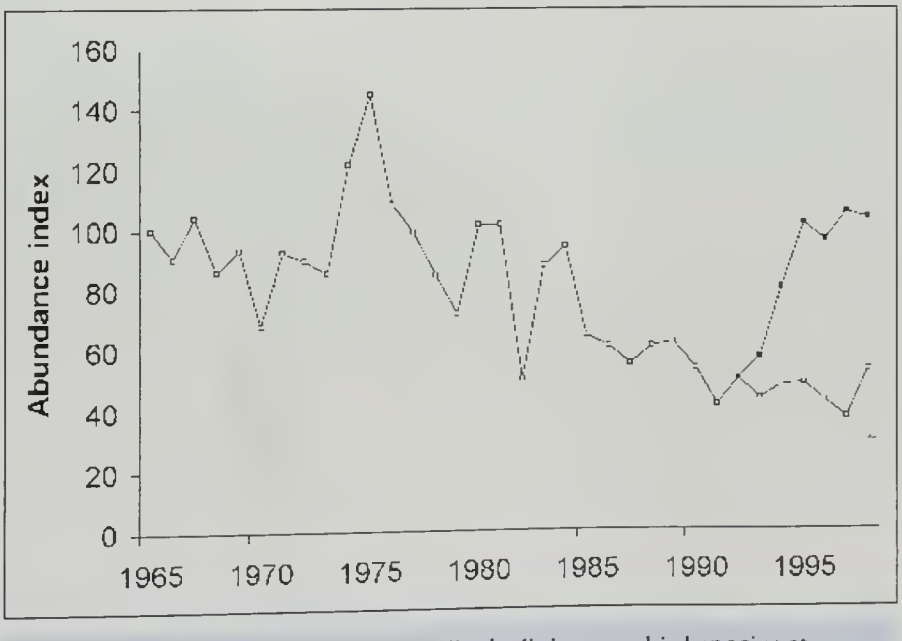


Fig. 1. Relative abundance of nationally declining songbird species at Loddington, Leicestershire (1992-98; filled squares), compared with a local farm (1965-98; open squares). The local-farm index is corrected relative to a value of 100 in 1965. The Loddington index is corrected relative to the local-farm index in 1992.

Wider implications

The game-management system comprises a wide range of management practices, each of which may have a different influence on the population levels of individual bird species with particular ecological requirements. For example, it is known that field-boundary management has a direct effect on the breeding abundance of Common Whitethroats and Yellowhammers at Loddington (Stoate & Szczur 2001), and management of other habitats is likely to have a similar influence on the abundance of other species. Control of predators may contribute to higher populations of species that are susceptible to nest predation, while winter survival of some species may be increased by the provision of grain and seed-bearing crops. As is the case for pheasants, the species for which the system was designed, there is likely to be an interaction between the different management practices in terms of their impact on different bird species. The system as a whole is therefore likely to have



Chris Stoate

185. Farmland at Loddington, Leicestershire, June 2000. Perennial herbaceous vegetation in field boundaries provides nest sites and insect-rich foraging habitats for game and non-game species.

a greater impact on bird conservation than that of the individual components of the system in isolation. It is planned to investigate the effects of nest predation on breeding abundance at Loddington, by introducing a cessation of predator control while maintaining habitat management and winter feeding.

Whatever the mechanism responsible, the results of this study have important implications for the conservation of birds on farmland. First, the project demonstrates that songbird population declines can be reversed in a very short period of time if appropriate management is applied. Secondly, it demonstrates that game management may have a wider role for the conservation of farmland birds. This second point is important, because it means that the existing interests of farmers in the management of gamebirds can be harnessed for wider conservation benefits. It is known, for example, that farmers with game interests are more likely to take part in agri-environment schemes, and that they are more likely to take a wider interest in non-game species, than are farmers without an interest in game (Macdonald & Johnson 2000). Because the game-management system targets a wild bird species (Common Pheasant) which exploits a broad range of habitats, it is more genuinely integrated with the farming system, and more closely attuned to the requirements of other birds, than are some other management systems which also have environmental objectives.

This is the first study to demonstrate reversal of the decline in a farmland bird community following the adoption of a practical management package. It reveals that there is some cause for optimism, and that the future of birds on farmland need not be



Chris Stoate

186. Farmland at Loddington, Leicestershire, June 2000. Selective use of herbicides in crop headlands permits the establishment of some weed species. These support invertebrate communities which are an important food source for gamebird chicks and passerine nestlings.

so bleak as it is sometimes portrayed. Achieving Loddington's results on a wider scale, however, requires a combination of state funding and farmer commitment. Stoate *et al.* (in press) have shown that cultural as well as economic considerations impinge on the management of field margins by farmers, while agri-environment schemes such as Countryside Stewardship are most likely to be implemented effectively if farmers' cultural values are accommodated within the schemes. In the case of farmers interested in game, options to provide perennial field-boundary nesting cover, and crop mixtures designed to provide food and cover in winter, are likely to be particularly relevant. There is, therefore, scope for a partnership between Government and private landowners in the conservation of birds on farmland, coupling agri-environment incentives with the interests and knowledge of farmers.

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Adult Little Gulls summering in Britain, 1975-97

with comments on the likelihood of an expansion of the breeding range

Doug Messenger

ABSTRACT Small numbers of adult Little Gulls *Larus minutus* regularly spend the summer in Britain. During the period 1975-97 there was no increase in these numbers, with an average of 5.2 summering adults recorded each year; four confirmed breeding attempts took place, with a further three probable instances. If further breeding attempts do occur, and are successful, they are most unlikely to involve more than an occasional opportunist pair. An expansion of the breeding range to include Britain is considered to be extremely improbable in the foreseeable future.

The Little Gull *Larus minutus* occupies a huge breeding range, stretching from the east and south coasts of the Baltic in the west to the Ob basin in the east, with the bulk of the population nesting in south-west Siberia and northern Kazakhstan. Notwithstanding, the species occasionally nests hundreds, even thousands of kilometres outside its main breeding range (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997). Since the mid 1950s, when the number of spring passage Little Gulls reaching Britain began to increase (Hutchinson & Neath 1978), there have been small numbers of adults summering in

187 & 188. Adult Little Gulls *Larus minutus*, Seaforth, Merseyside, April 1988 (left) and May 1999 (right). *Steve Young*/Birdwatch







Steve Young/Birdwatch

189. Adult Little Gulls *Larus minutus*, Seaforth, Merseyside, displaying (centre), May 1990.

Britain each year. The presence and behaviour of some of these summering individuals have prompted speculation about the likelihood of a westward expansion of the breeding range from mainland Europe into Britain.

History of recorded breeding attempts

One of the earliest documented records of adult Little Gulls summering in Britain was of a pair at Oakmere gullery, Cheshire, on 7th June 1941 (Guest *et al.* 1992). The earliest known possible breeding attempt was at Fairburn Ings, South Yorkshire, in 1958, when an adult was observed calling and displaying over a Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus* colony from 17th June until the colony was washed out on 28th June (Hutchinson & Neath 1978). Then, in 1964, at Salthouse, Norfolk, 'hopes were high when a pair stayed throughout May in a gull colony. They frequently mobbed intruders and were watched courting and displaying for long periods. Tern-like postures and aerial chases were recorded on several occasions. Unfortunately no eggs were laid.' (Allard 1986). Subsequently, an adult was observed displaying in a Black-headed Gull colony in the Derwent Valley, Yorkshire, from 14th to 28th May 1966 (Hutchinson & Neath 1978), while during the 'Atlas years' (1968-72) two instances of Little Gulls frequenting suitable habitat were regarded as possible breeding attempts (Sharrock 1976).

In June 1975, the first confirmed breeding attempt in Britain took place. A pair nested and laid three eggs at the Ouse Washes, on the Norfolk/Cambridgeshire border; unfortunately, the eggs were broken and one of the adults was killed, apparently by Common Rats *Rattus norvegicus*. This event was described at the time as 'nothing more than an isolated breeding attempt by passage birds' (Carson *et al.* 1977).

The second such instance occurred three years later, at Fairburn Ings in 1978. Although eggs were not found, the behaviour of two Little Gulls during a four-week period in ideal nesting habitat was sufficient for the occurrence to be accepted as attempted breeding. Sadly, the birds' efforts were terminated by vandals at a time when it was assumed that the incubation period was almost complete (Madge 1979).

A third confirmed breeding record also occurred in 1978, at Hickling, Norfolk. Throughout June there was a great deal of activity around a nest site, and three eggs



Steve Young/Birdwatch

190. Adult Little Gull *Larus minutus*, Seaforth, Merseyside, April 1999.

were laid. At about the time when the eggs were due to hatch, however, the nest was found to be empty and only one adult could be found in the vicinity. Local observers considered the culprit to be a Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus* (Allard 1986).

Most recently, in June 1987, at Lound Gravel Pit, Nottinghamshire, another attempt failed at the egg stage. Three eggs were laid, and failure was due in part to predation, although theft of the first two eggs was not ruled out.

There have also been a number of records of recently fledged juvenile Little Gulls in Britain. For example, during the 1968-72 *Atlas*, a juvenile recorded at an unnamed location was considered by the observers 'not able to have flown across the North Sea'. On 17th June 1988, in Mid Scotland, a very recently fledged juvenile, still with down on the head and with primaries not fully grown (Spencer *et al.* 1990), seems most likely to have fledged locally. The same is true of another newly fledged juvenile in Northumberland on 25th June 1980. Unfortunately, it is very difficult for field observers to determine precisely when a young juvenile has fledged, since, given favourable weather conditions, a youngster could conceivably cross the North Sea from Baltic breeding grounds within two weeks of fledging. These records all come from that area of Britain where autumn passage movement is first observed, often in late June.

Another record in Mid Scotland, of four juveniles on 25th June 1991 (Ogilvie *et al.* 1994), is perhaps the most significant of all, in that it involves the earliest ever occurrence of two or more juveniles together. This record coincided with what was by far the largest number of summering adults in Britain, and perhaps represents the first successful breeding by Little Gulls in Britain.

In view of the isolated breeding attempts by Little Gulls in Britain documented above, and the continued speculation which they have generated, a review of the records of summering adults was undertaken in order to assess whether an expansion of the Little Gull's breeding range to Britain is likely. Although previous forecasts and events were taken into account, the final summary was based primarily on documented records for the period 1975-97 inclusive.

Methods

A successful appeal for reports of Little Gulls in summer was made to all County Recorders. Records during the period 1975-97 were also derived from a search of almost 1,500 county, local and observatory bird reports, the annual reports of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, all relevant literature,

and a great deal of correspondence. Some unpublished records were also uncovered.

For this study, it was crucial to define the term 'summering', the key object of the definition being to exclude records of spring and autumn passage birds. Meticulous recording of Little Gulls at Seaforth, Merseyside, suggests that 98% of spring passage birds observed during the study period, involving between 5,000 and 10,000 individuals, have moved through before 15th May. The few individuals that do occur after this date are mostly first-summer birds, which may remain at the site during the summer or simply linger for a day or two. This pattern of occurrence is broadly repeated at other sites throughout the UK, supporting the definition of 'summer' used in the *New Atlas* (Gibbons *et al.* 1993), i.e. 15th May to 15th June. Since the object of the present study was to examine the evidence for establishment of a breeding population, the summering period was taken as commencing on 15th May. In order to eliminate late migrants, however, records of single adults present for one day only between 15th and 22nd May were ignored. Records for the east coast of Britain show that return passage in autumn is well underway in the first half of July, occasionally as early as the end of June. Consequently, 22nd June was chosen as a cut-off date for summering Little Gulls. The vast majority of individuals that are newly arrived at sites after 22nd June will involve passage birds, and will almost certainly not be potential breeders.

All records in the literature referring to adult or second-year Little Gulls that were said to be present for any part of the summer (as defined above) were included in the analysis. First-year individuals are very rarely part of a breeding pair (Cramp & Simmons 1983), and records of first-years were therefore excluded. The possibility of bias due to incorrect ageing of gulls was considered, but, since Little Gulls in breeding plumage are such strikingly beautiful birds, it seems likely that they would generally have been aged correctly. Furthermore, because summer records of adults are unusual, it was felt that on most occasions observers would record the age of the bird, too. It was assumed, therefore, that the majority of reports of unaged Little Gulls in summer (involving 23% of records extracted from bird reports) would refer to first-years. Although this may lead to adults being under-reported, the potential bias is probably very small.

Results and discussion

Through correspondence and research, a 91% coverage of Britain was achieved. During the 23-year review period, an average of 5.2 adult Little Gulls was recorded in Britain each summer (fig. 1). The underlying trend in the number of summering adults has remained more or less constant during the study period, though with an obvious peak in 1991 (and a less obvious secondary

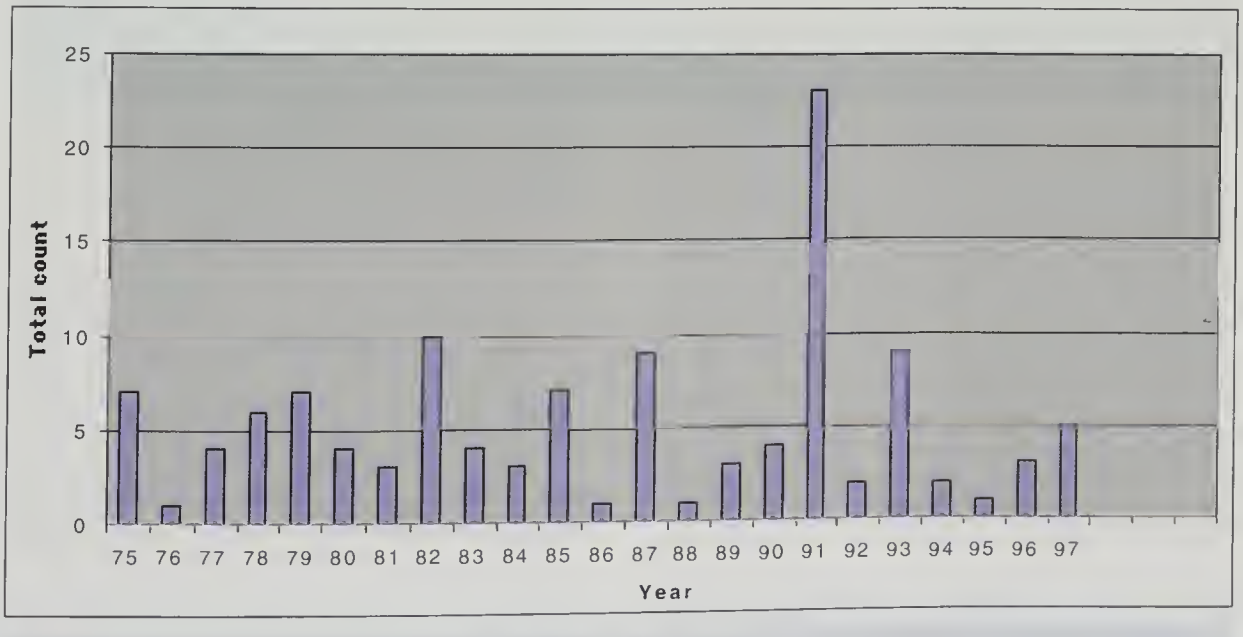


Fig. 1. Numbers of adult Little Gulls *Larus minutus* summering in Britain, 1975-97.

peak in 1993). Seawatching records have been omitted, as also have one or two records of sick or injured birds.

The previous breeding attempts outlined earlier have prompted various authors to speculate either that breeding Little Gulls are under-recorded in Britain, or that the species will become an established breeder in Britain in due course (Furze 1967; Madge 1978; Spencer *et al.* 1985). This study reveals, however, that there has been no upward trend in the number of adults present in summer during the period 1975-97 (and at the same time there has been no increase in the number of summering immatures, either). The number of spring migrants recorded has shown a fairly constant increase during this time, but there appears to be no relationship between these passage migrants and the number of summering birds in the same year. In conclusion, therefore, it would seem highly unlikely that a population of breeding Little Gulls will become established in Britain in the foreseeable future.

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Looking back

Seventy-five years ago:

'GREAT AND BLUE TITMICE IN SKYE. In a *Practical Handbook of British Birds* I notice that the Great Titmouse (*Parus major*) is said to be only a rare visitor to Skye. It may be interesting therefore to record that I saw several in the Armadale Castle Woods on January 21st, 1926. With reference to the Blue Titmouse (*Parus caeruleus*), which is stated to be rare in Skye, I saw several in the trees at Broadford on January 23rd, and found them quite common in the trees by the side of a burn at Portree. EVELYN V. BAXTER' (*Brit. Birds* 20: 54, July 1926)

Twenty-five years ago:

From 'The Puffin in Britain and Ireland', by M. P. Harris. 'SUMMARY. The recent overall decline in the British population of Puffins *Fratercula arctica* appears to have stopped, at least temporarily. This conclusion is based on detailed burrow counts at seven Scottish colonies and a survey of published and unpublished data for other British colonies. The few recent apparent declines have been mostly in small colonies at the southern edge of the range, such as the Channel Islands, Brittany, southern England. It is tentatively suggested that it is not a coincidence that the numbers have stopped declining just when the temperature of the seas around Britain have started to fall.' (*Brit. Birds* 69: 259, July 1976)

Plumages of Common Stonechats in Sicily, and comparison with vagrant 'Siberian Stonechats'

Andrea Corso

In 1949, Common Stonechats *Saxicola torquata* breeding in Sicily were described as a separate race, different from both *S. t. rubicola*, found throughout much of mainland Europe, and *S. t. hibernans* of westernmost Europe. The Sicilian population was given the name *S. t. archimedes* (Clancey 1949). Clancey reported that this race was 'confined to the island of Sicily, where it abounds in a variety of habitats'; the type specimen was described from 'near Siracusa'. Vaurie (1959) considered *archimedes* to be synonymous with *rubicola*, and this view has been adopted by Iapichino & Massa (1989), and is followed by the official Italian List, although without further study. New research into this taxon is currently in progress (Corso in prep.). Nevertheless, it remains unquestionable that, whether or not the Sicilian stonechats are confirmed as a separate race, the plumage of these birds, at any age, is often quite different from that of typical *rubicola*.

Many illustrations of *rubicola* in popular field guides, and also in *BWP* (Cramp 1988), which contains very detailed illustrations of all the Western Palearctic races of Common Stonechat, show that race as having a warm brown, evenly dark-streaked rump and



Andrea Corso

191. Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*, Vendicari, Siracusa, Sicily, December 1999. This photo shows a typical *rubicola* in winter plumage.



Enzo Savo

192. Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*, Italy (location and date unknown). This photo shows a *rubicola* with white admixed in the rump.

uppertail-coverts. This is in contrast to 'Siberian Stonechat' (Common Stonechat of the eastern races *maura/stejnegeri*), which is depicted with a wide, unmarked, pale band across the rump and uppertail-coverts. Only in Barthel (1992) and Stoddart (1992), and more recently in Walker (2001), are there photographs and illustrations of *rubicola* showing some white feathers on a brown rump, or with sparse black streaking over a whitish rump and uppertail-coverts.

For some time, foreign birdwatchers visiting southern Italy, and in particular Sicily, have occasionally reported birds that they have identified as 'Siberian Stonechats'. During both spring and autumn migrations, the Common Stonechat is an abundant species throughout Sicily, and it is possible to see a wide variety of plumages here during these periods. For example, in spring, there are some very dark, warm-coloured individuals with a dark rump and evenly rufous underparts, as well as more typical *rubicola*, which are paler overall, with a dark-streaked brown rump and dark throat, and others with white admixed in the rump (plate 192). Among all these, however, there are always stonechats which are slightly bigger, with darker upperparts in summer and paler upperparts in winter, and, most importantly, a wide area of unmarked white on the rump. It is these which are almost invariably identified by visiting birders as 'Siberian Stonechats'; they belong, however, to the resident breeding population of Common Stonechats in Sicily.

Description of Sicilian Common Stonechats

Male summer Typical Sicilian males appear very similar to *maura* in summer. They show a wide, unmarked white rump; a conspicuous, broad white semi-collar (sometimes almost a complete collar); black upperparts; a broad white wing patch; pale underparts which are of a warmer, richer shade of rufous on the breast; and relatively long wings (plate 193).

Male winter In winter, males become a great deal paler and colder in colour, with the rump being much duller and washed with brown, but still forming a distinctly pale (sometimes white) panel which shows a strong contrast with the rest of the upperparts. The white on the collar and the wings becomes narrower and more limited at this season.

Female summer In contrast to males, females are more like *rubicola* in summer, being only a shade paler than the latter, with a paler throat and a hint of a pale super-



Andrea Corso

193. Adult male Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* at breeding site near Siracusa, Sicily, April 1997. This individual is superficially very similar to *S. t. maura*. Note, however, that the flanks are washed orange-rufous.



Andrea Corso

194. Female Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*, Siracusa, Sicily, March 1996. This individual, still in winter plumage, appears very similar to *S. t. maura*.

cilium. The rump tends to be cleaner and less dark-streaked.

Female winter In winter, females become paler, and consequently more like *maura*. In fact, some individuals are extremely similar to *maura*, showing a completely pale throat, a pale supercilium, and cold, pale upperparts (plate 194).

First-year First-winter Sicilian stonechats are typically more similar to *maura* than to *rubicola* and *hibernans*. They are, generally, paler than a typical *rubicola*, having a paler throat, often a pale supercilium, a less patterned rump with fewer, or narrower, streaks, and paler wings. They differ from typical first-winter *maura* in that they never have a completely unmarked pale or orangish-buff rump, and they show warmer upperparts and underparts, and duller dark underwings.

Separation from 'Siberian Stonechat'

The underwings of male Sicilian stonechats are slightly paler and duller than those of a typical *maura*, being blackish with pale, whitish or greyish, fringes, mostly on the axillaries; but darker than on a typical *rubicola*. The underparts are warmer, with the flanks washed orange or pale rufous, never completely white as on a typical *maura*. In winter, the upperparts are always warmer than those of *maura*, as are the underparts, but they are colder in colour than those of a typical *rubicola*. The rump in winter is never unmarked, uniform orange or orange-buff, as it is on some *maura*.

Females in summer are rather easy to separate from *maura*. Females in winter, however, may present the biggest problem of all. At this time of year, the underwing is perhaps duller and paler, while the rump is warmer with more patterning, as are the rest of the upperparts.

Discussion

Common Stonechats from Sicily, which may resemble 'Siberian Stonechats' of the race *maura*, have been observed on migration at the Strait of Messina (Cardelli *in litt.*; pers. obs.), and have also been recorded in southern and central Italy (plate 195). Furthermore, there have been records of similar individuals elsewhere in southern Europe (see below). This should be borne in mind by all those European Rarities Committees dealing with claimed records of 'Siberian Stonechats' in southern Europe. The possibility that such records may in fact refer to Common Stonechats of the type found in Sicily, rather than to *maura* or *stejnegeri*, has never been highlighted before, but should be considered before such records are accepted.

The 'Siberian Stonechat' is, in fact, very rare in the Mediterranean region. So far, there is only one published record for Italy, a first-winter in Lazio, central Italy, on 1st October 1988, although this taxon was not considered by the Italian Rarities Committee (COI) at the time (Fraticelli *et al.* 1989); other reports are unconfirmed. There are no accepted records for Malta (R. Galea & J. A. Montalto *in litt.*), and very few from other Mediterranean countries. These are as follows: a first-winter female in Camargue, France, on 4th November 1996 (M. Duquet *in litt.*); three accepted records for Cyprus, in December 1971, January 1991 and September 2000, with details of sex available for only one of these, reported as a male (J. Gordon *in litt.*); and four accepted records for Spain, in Tarragona on 2nd March 1997, in Coruna on 6th April 1997, in Coruna on 13th September 1997 and in Barcelona on 30th-31st March 1998 (R. Gutiérrez *in litt.*).

While this paper discusses the Sicilian Common Stonechat, this being the population most studied by the author, it should be borne in mind that stonechats with white on the rump are often observed elsewhere in Italy, where a possible cline exists: such individuals become more frequent, and the pale area becomes wider, as one moves from north to south. It is also important to note that similarly marked Common Stonechats, with wide areas of white on the rump/uppertail-coverts and on the wing, have been observed in many Mediterranean countries, particularly in mainland Spain and Mallorca (R. Gutiérrez *in litt.*; C. Cederroth & C. Johansson *in litt.*), Morocco (T. Conzemius *in litt.*; see plate 196) and Tunisia (pers. obs.).

A full review of the characters of the races *rubicola* and *hibernans*, and the extent of variation within each, would seem advisable.



Enzo Savo

195. Two male Common Stonechats *Saxicola torquata*, central Italy, spring 1996. The individual on the right is somewhat like *S. t. maura* in appearance.



Tom Conzemius

196. Male Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*, Oued Massa, Morocco, April 2001.

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This paper is particularly timely, as the British Birds Rarities Committee is about to undertake a review of all spring records of 'Siberian Stonechat' in Britain. Eds.



Bird Illustrator of the Year 2001

Bird Illustrator of the Year

1st	Rosemary Watts/Powell	(Fareham, Hampshire)
2nd	Pasehalis Dougalis	(Munich, Germany)
3rd	Szabolcs Kókay	(Budapest, Hungary)

The Richard Richardson Award

No entries reeeived this year

The PJC Award

1st	George Brown	(Braintree, Essex)

This year, the judging took plaee at the Christopher Helm offices in London. Making up the numbers on the panel alongside Robert Gillmor, Alan Harris and Keith Shaekleton, I was a little nervous about voieing the opinions of a mere publisher. Nonetheless, it was faseinating to gain some insight into the way in which sueh eminent artists approach their work. In fact, I was surprised by the degree of eonsensus that prevailed, and that the judges, despite the wide spectrum of style and experienee whieh they colleetively spanned, all shared similar ideas about what makes a good bird illustration.

Eaeh entry had to satisfy the usual competition rules. Entrants were required to submit a set of four blaek-and-white drawings in pen and ink or scraperboard, each to strictly speeified dimensions. Although such rules always seem mean-spirited, Keith Shaekleton wisely pointed out that no artist, no matter how gifted, will make a living from his or her work if unable to follow instructions.

In addition, the entrants were also invited to submit a eolour painting suitable for use on the eover of *British Birds*. This is judged separately and may be submitted in addition to the line-drawings, or alone, or not at all.

Illustration is a preeise discipline, offering less freedom for expression than other, more expansive art forms. For book-publishers, the success of an illustration is relative to the page on whieh it is printed. An illustrator works to a tight brief, with the illustration performing a function, rather than being an end in itself. Whether this brief is to illustrate the moult pattern in the wing of an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*, two Calandra Larks *Melanocorypha calandra* in a typical Andalusian landseape, or simply 'something Christmassy' (to eite recent examples which I have encountered), every job plaees different demands on the artist. The context (i.e. the nature of the book, magazine, ehapter or page) usually dietates the style, determining whether the illustration should be explanatory or decorative, simple or complex, and tight or loose.

Within these parameters, it can be diffieult for an artist to express a personal style. Yet it is the ability to do just this that the judges were looking for. Consequently, the sueeessful pieees were those that showed both discipline and originality. Key elements under serutiny ineluded mastery of the medium itself (the control of line, the handling of tonal values, etc.), ornithological aeeuraey (length of bill, number of primaries, eorrect habitat, etc.), and eomposition (putting the whole thing together in a pleasing and effective way). Finally, on top of everything, the winning work needed that elusive quality of touch or imagination: something special that, in the eyes of the judges, lifted it above its competitors.

This year's collection of drawings offered a pleasing variety of subject matter, from a broad sweep of entrants. Drawings were received from Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy and Switzerland, as well as many from closer to home. As is now expected, the standard throughout was high, with much that I, as a publisher, would certainly have been very happy to use. It was particularly encouraging to receive a number of entries on scraperboard, an increasingly neglected medium (try finding a shop that stocks the stuff), but highly effective when properly handled. The birds depicted ranged from Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris* to Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus*, with even a Great Auk *Pinguinus impennis* thrown in for good measure. Personal experience shone through in many of the entries (although perhaps not with the Great Auk). Some drawings also offered the extra dimension of an implicit story: for example, terns *Sterna* mobbing a birder, or a brief cliff-face encounter between a Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* and a Little Owl *Athene noctua*, such pictures prompting intriguing questions about what went on before and after the moment captured.

Given that the standard was so high, a path towards the winner had to be cleared by a ruthless process of elimination. To this end, certain repeated problems were identified by the panel, some of which may be worth mentioning here as tips for the aspiring illustrator on what to be aware of.

The successful drawings conveyed authenticity, showing that the artist knew both the bird and its context intimately, and had distilled this knowledge into the evocative portrayal of a single moment. Less convincing, however, were depictions of birds, often rarities, that clearly stemmed from an exciting moment witnessed in real life, but lacked the attention to background or the feel for 'jizz' that comes from years of close observation and patient drawing. To state the obvious, it is easiest to draw well what you know well.

A similar pitfall was evident in some drawings that seemed to derive directly from photographs. Transferring a photographic image to a line-drawing gives the illustrator a short cut to impressive naturalistic effects of light, but this works only if the drawing is sound and conveys a convincing underlying structure. Such drawings can be dramatic at first glance, but on closer inspection unconvincing, often with some anatomical uncertainty lurking beneath the surface.

Fundamental problems with anatomy let down some otherwise excellent drawings. Plumage and other surface intricacies had been rendered with impressive care, but, to take one example, the angle of head and breast (facing forwards) was impossibly misaligned with the angle of tail and vent (turned away). Such problems probably lie in the artist 'not seeing the wood for the trees': a flaw in the construction becomes lost to the artist's eye once he or she becomes absorbed in the fiddly, close-up work on surface detail. Often, a nagging doubt about a drawing was pinned down by the panel only when somebody took a step back to squint at the structure of the whole.

Mishandling of scale also caused difficulties. Mountains and molehills can become confused if you take your eye off them. In many cases, the problem arose from overemphasising the bird in relation to its setting, inadvertently enlarging the bird and shrinking its background. Thus, Greenfinches *Carduelis chloris* can swell to the proportions of a Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus*, fence posts shrink to chopsticks, or, in reverse, pond ripples loom like Hawaiian breakers. Although the bird is generally the main subject of the drawing, and assumed to be the focus of interest, it is still only a physical object, like any other, and so is subject to the same laws of perspective and scale.

Good composition was the key to the most successful entries. While it seems logical to make the bird your principal subject, positioning it in the centre of the picture, a number of artists had chosen a different approach, and placed their subjects off-centre. By drawing attention to the patterns within the bird's background, this often produced a more imaginative overall composition. Peripheral details, such as the delicate structure of grass heads, or the intricate texture of birch *Betula* bark, are no less deserving of attention than the bird itself. In many cases such details were beautifully handled, setting off the bird, and introducing interesting compositional echoes. The most evocative drawings are often those that convey a strong sense of place, and here again there was a clear distinction between

drawings with real authenticity and those weakened by taking short cuts. Unfortunately, imaginary rocky crags can look more like a set from *Doctor Who* than like the Picos de Europa. Landforms, as anything else, must be sketched and studied to be convincing. Of course, there is nothing wrong with placing your bird in the middle of the picture, but the composition should be arranged so that the background enhances and does not detract from the subject. In a number of cases, the panel noted the careless positioning of a background detail – a shadow, branch, or line of barbed wire – that interfered with the profile of the bird and so reduced the impact of the subject. Striking the balance between convincing background and strong subject is tricky, and often requires some artistic licence to manipulate effectively the interplay of line, tone and contrast.

The deliberations and hair-splitting were endless, but winners had to be chosen. Rosemary Watts/Powell, who came second in last year's competition (*Brit. Birds* 93: 333-339), was awarded first prize this year. The panel agreed that her set of four delicately observed compositions revealed a rare ability to capture fully a bird's character while positioning the bird discreetly within its context. In each case, the bird is dependent upon, but not subordinate to, its surroundings, which, in turn, are animated by the presence of the bird. Often, as with the European Nightjars *Caprimulgus europaeus*, the bird itself is tiny in relation to the whole, but its jizz is perfectly captured. And where close detail is offered, as with the lichen on the twig beneath the Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*, it is done so with a confidence born of real skill and experience.

Paschalis Dougalis was awarded second prize for an impressive collection, demonstrating first-rate handling of detail and an excellent feel for the character and movement of birds. The flock of House Martins *Delichon urbica* alighting and taking off, a challenging subject, shows a fine grasp of stance and anatomy. His dramatic painting of a Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus*, chosen as a forthcoming front cover of *British Birds*, is evidence of his versatility. The masterly handling of the fine textures of rock and plumage beneath a harsh Mediterranean light reveals an artist who is at home with many media.

Third place was awarded to Szabolcs Kókay for a highly original set of drawings. His Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* on St Stephen's Cathedral in Budapest continues a theme that won him last year's PJC Award, and shows an imaginative feel for composition, backed up by highly skilled draftsmanship.

The PJC Award is presented each year, in memory of the late Pauline Jane Cook, for a single drawing selected for its individual merit. This year it was awarded to George Brown, whose apparently simple study of a Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* has a deceptive depth and subtlety. A skilled handling of tone and texture lifts the back of the bird from the mossy lawn, and captures a familiar moment with perfect poise.

Perhaps this year's only disappointment was that no junior entries were received for the Richard Richardson prize (awarded to artists aged 21 or younger). I hope that the wonderful work seen here on these pages will encourage many more artists, young and not so young, to enter next year's competition. It is surely true to say that the more bird-illustrators we have, the more likely it is that there will remain birds to be illustrated.

Mike Unwin, Senior Editor at Christopher Helm, on behalf of the judges: Robert Gillmor, Alan Harris and Keith Shackleton



BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR winner: European Nightjars *Caprimulgus europaeus*, New Forest, Hampshire. *Rosemary Watts/Powell*



BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR winner: Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly. *Rosemary Watts/Powell*



BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR winner: Oystercatchers *Haematopus ostralegus*, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly. *Rosemary Watts/Powell*



Left: BIRD ILLUSTRATOR OF THE YEAR winner: Little Owl *Athene noctua*, Needs Ore Point, Hampshire. *Rosemary Watts/Powell*



Right: BIY second: Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*. *Paschalis Dougalis*



BIY second: House Martins *Delichon urbica*. *Paschalis Dougalis*



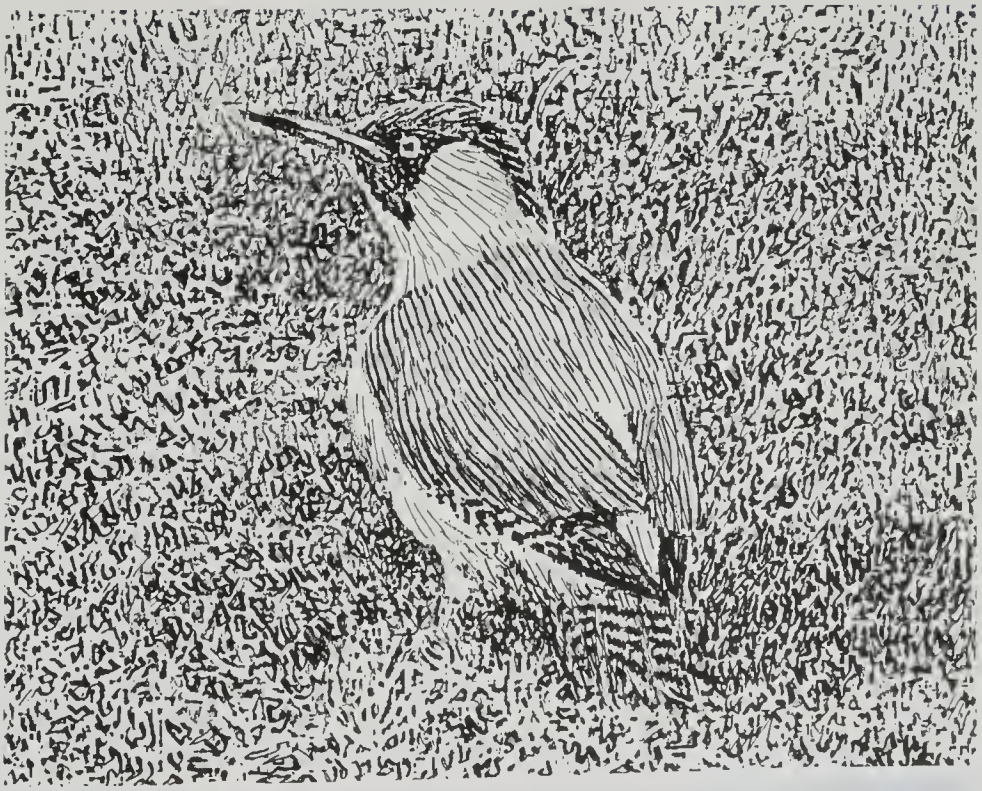
BIY second: Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*.
Paschalis Dougalis



BIY third: Wallcreeper *Tichodroma muraria*. *Szabolcs Kokay*



BIY third: Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* on Saint Stephen's Cathedral, Budapest. *Szabolcs Kókay*



THE PJC AWARD winner: Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis*. *George Brown*

The Best Annual Bird Report Awards



This is the tenth and final year in which these awards have been presented by *British Birds*. When this competition was launched, in 1991, one of the key objectives was to improve the standard and the quality of county, regional and bird-observatory reports published in Britain. That it has succeeded in this aim is unquestionable, and the exceptionally high quality of the vast majority of entries submitted for this year's awards bears testimony to this. A new 'Best Bird Report' competition will be organised by the British Trust for Ornithology, under the aegis of its 'Bird Clubs Partnership', for reports published during 2001 and subsequently. This will focus on slightly different aspects of the content of these annual publications, and we look forward to seeing the results of the new regime.

Returning to the present, we present below the results of our assessment of bird reports published during the calendar-year 2000. The criteria used to evaluate the reports this year were the same as those

© *British Birds* 94: 326-328, July 2001

employed in judging the 1999 competition, these having been developed over the years to reflect the many different aspects involved in producing such a report. Five judges, representing different organisations, assessed the reports independently and awarded marks as follows. The *British Birds* representative (Roger Riddington) awarded up to eight points for the 'basics' of the report (features such as a contents page, scientific names, a status summary, a list of contributors, and so on); the Society of Wildlife Artists representative (Robert Gillmor) awarded up to five points for appearance and design; the British Trust for Ornithology representative (Jeff Baker) awarded up to seven points for the inclusion of results of BTO or local surveys, and other special articles or reports; the British Birds Rarities Committee representative (Reg Thorpe) awarded up to seven points for the treatment of rarities, exotic species, and early and late dates for migrants, and for providing a seasonal review; while the Association of County Recorders and Editors representative (Mike Rogers) awarded up to three points for appropriate use of a map and gazetteer of the area covered. In addition, five points were given for any report published within 12 months of the year that it covers, and then each judge allocated up to a further ten points for the quality of the systematic list, assessed both for general interest and readability and for reference purposes. A maximum score of 85 points was, therefore, available for each report in the competition.

Of the 43 entries for the competition in 2000, no fewer than 38 achieved a score of 51 points (60%) or more, while 19 reports scored 68 points (80%) or more. Once the results were tabulated, it quickly became apparent that many familiar names are in the top ten once again (table 1). Avon, the clear winner this year with a score of 77 points (91%), won this competition in 1994, and has been placed in the top ten no fewer than eight times during the ten years in which this award has been made. Suffolk (second this year, and winner last year), Norfolk and Essex are equally at home among the leading counties. These reports are all published by large, well-supported societies, but a regular place among the leaders may be achieved by smaller clubs, too. The Fife report, equal third this year, has now been in the top four for three years in succession, and was placed first in the category for best report produced by medium-sized clubs (those with 200-400 members) for the third year in a row. Shetland, in equal fifth position, was the runner-up in this category. Just squeezing into the top ten, the report for Greater Manchester was the leader in the section for small bird clubs (those with fewer than 200 members). Second in this category, by just a whisker, with 68 points (80%), was last year's leading 'small-club report', SK58 (covering a single 10-km square bordering Rotherham, Sheffield and Worksop). Only three entries were received from bird observatories this year, the result being that Spurn edged out Fair Isle for the top spot, with a score of 56 points (66%), compared with Fair Isle's 54 points (64%).

Table 1. The top annual bird reports published in 2000.

Position	County/area	Editor	Score
1st	Avon	A. H. Davis	77 (91%)
2nd	Suffolk	G. Lowe	75 (88%)
3rd =	Fife	David Fotheringham	72 (85%)
3rd =	Norfolk	Giles Dunmore	72(85%)
5th =	Shetland	Mike Pennington	71 (84%)
5th =	West Midlands	Graham Harrison	71 (84%)
7th =	Cornwall	Ian Wilson & Kester Wilson	70 (82%)
7th =	Essex	A. Goodey, S. J. Grimwade & A. Mullins	70 (82%)
7th =	Isles of Scilly	Martin Scott	70 (82%)
10th =	Derbyshire	R. M. R. James	69 (81%)
10th =	Greater Manchester	Judith Smith	69 (81%)

As in past years, all the judges commented favourably on both the quality and the quantity of information, and its presentation, in almost all the reports considered. The top ten this year, as in most recent years, were separated by only a few points, and the winning positions were, to all intents and purposes, down to the judges' personal opinions of the merits of the systematic list. So, for example, the Avon report received the maximum ten points available for the systematic list from no fewer than three of the judges, a feat equalled only by Essex and Sussex. Most of the leaders scored almost full marks in the sections judged individually by the representatives of the five organisations supporting the award, as described earlier. Mention should perhaps be given to Norfolk, Essex and Sussex, which were the only three counties in the top ten to achieve five out of five for the appearance and design of their reports, including the front cover. Robert Gillmor's standards are renowned as being high, and these three examples are certainly extremely attractive publications.

One factor that pushed three of the leading contenders down the scoreboard was their delay in publication. West Midlands, Essex and Sussex all suffered a five-point penalty for the fact that it was their 1998, rather than 1999, reports that were being examined. West Midlands would have been in second place without this penalty, while the other two would have been equal third. With the level of detail and the quantity of information that these annual bird reports now contain, it is more difficult than ever for editors to meet the one-year deadline, although we felt that this penalty for the delay was still appropriate. Bird news quickly becomes old news, particularly where migrants are concerned.

Very many of the county and regional bird reports that we have received for this annual assessment are now extremely sophisticated, high-quality publications. Those societies and clubs whose reports appear in our list with a score of 60% or more can be assured that an excellent record of the ornithological year in their county or region will be preserved for posterity. It is the less fortunate counties, those with limited resources (in terms of either an editor with the necessary time to write the report, or even sufficient recorders to supply enough material), that are perhaps the greatest cause for concern.

A copy of the judges' scores will be sent to any official report editor or recorder who requests this from the address below.

Dr R. Riddington, Jeff Baker, Robert Gillmor, Mike Rogers and Reg Thorpe, c/o Chapel Cottage, Dunrossness, Shetland ZE2 9JH

The year's best bird reports can be obtained as follows:

AVON Dr H. E. Rose, c/o 12 Birbeck Road, Bristol BS9 1BD (£6.00 incl. p&p)

CORNWALL Keith Harris, Chyvarlle, Gunwalloe, Helston, Cornwall (£6.00 incl. p&p)

DERBYSHIRE R. W. Key, 3 Farningham Close, Spondon, Derby DE21 7DZ (£6.50 incl. p&p)

ESSEX Brian Cooper, 4 Helston Road, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 6JE (£8.00 incl. p&p)

FIFE David Fotheringham, 35 Seath Avenue, Langbank, Port Glasgow, Renfrewshire PA14 6PD (£7.00 incl. p&p)

GREATER MANCHESTER Judith Smith, 12 Edge Green Street, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Wigan WN4 8SL (£5.54 incl. p&p)

ISLES OF SCILLY Martin Scott, 3 Heydor Flats, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly TR21 0JD (£5.00 incl. p&p)

NORFOLK David Paull, 8 Lindford Drive, Eaton, Norwich NR4 6LT (£8.00 incl. p&p)

SHETLAND Martin Heubeck, East House, Sumburgh Head Lighthouse, Virkie, Shetland ZE3 9JN (£7.00 incl. p&p)

SUFFOLK Suffolk Naturalists' Society, c/o The Museum, High Street, Ipswich IP1 3QH (£8.50 incl. p&p)

WEST MIDLANDS J. R. Winsper, 32 Links Road, Hollywood, Birmingham B14 4TP (£8.00 incl. p&p)

Letters

Predictions of the effects of global climate change on British birds

Moss (1998) appears to take human-induced global warming as a proven fact, despite quoting from the 1995 report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 1996) that the 'balance of evidence now *suggests* that there is a discernible human influence on global climate' (my italics). Hulme *et al.* (1999) were, however, unable to distinguish the human impact on climate from natural meteorological variation for much of western Europe, yet this has been largely ignored. The situation is further complicated by findings that climate variation can be correlated with changes in solar activity (Lockwood *et al.* 1999; Parker 1999). The forecasts for temperature rise during the twenty-first century range from 1°C to 4°C, that is 2.5°C ± 1.5°C, a margin of error of 60%. Any other scientific forecast with such a level of uncertainty would be treated with a degree of scepticism. These are global averages, and there is even greater uncertainty about local and regional effects, such as rainfall. Moss cites the opposing forecasts of both decreased and increased summer rainfall, and of both milder and wetter winters and colder and drier ones, but takes just one alternative and builds a hypothesis based upon it.

With so many diverse opinions, those who shout loudest, with the most dire predictions, are those most likely to catch the attention of journalists and the ears of politicians, who ultimately disburse the research funds. A more considered view might be that there is 'little scientific (or moral) justification for individual nations to develop a policy response to the threat of global warming based on the anticipated climatic changes within their own jurisdiction alone' (Harvey 2000). Making predictions about how future climate change may affect the British avifauna, and the conservation measures needed to support it, depends entirely on which scenario one believes, and, with such uncertainty, it is difficult to draw any conclusions other than the most general concepts. Anything else is speculation. In our crowded and artificial landscape, most of the conservation strategies discussed by Moss would be beneficial even without climate change.

It is hardly surprising that some of the warmest years on record have occurred recently, since appropriate instruments to measure temperature did not appear until the late seventeenth century, and a network of reliable reporting stations was established much later still (mostly in the twentieth century); yet these 'modern' records are being compared with the cold climates of the Little Ice Age. Furthermore, this latest trend is not supported by satellite data, which give a result statistically indistinguishable from zero (Bryant 1987).

Evidence from various sources, such as isotope analysis of Greenland ice cores, deep-sea drill cores and tree rings, indicates that current temperatures are still below those occurring during the Medieval Optimum, from about 900 to 1250 AD, the warm Romano-British period, from about 100 to 300 AD (a period when grapes were quite widely grown in England), and particularly the Post-glacial Optimum, about 9,500 to 5,500 years ago, when inferred temperatures were about 2°C to 3°C higher. That period saw the greening of the Sahara as a result of increased rainfall. A return of such conditions would benefit much more than the British summer migrants which winter in Africa.

The post-glacial warming of the British climate was a period of rapid fluctuations, flipping from arctic to temperate and back again in a few decades; it was not the process of a 1°C rise every 2,000 to 3,000 years claimed by Moss. Sources cited by Roberts (1998) indicate a rapid rise to temperate conditions about 15,000 years ago, at a rate of 1°C per decade. The climate flipped back to arctic conditions about 13,000 years ago, with reglaciation of upland areas and a West Highland ice-sheet becoming established in only 300 years. This cold period ended abruptly about 11,500 years ago with a temperature rise of 7°C in 50 years (Bryant 1987). These changes are much faster than anything now contemplated. The changes to the British avifauna must have been dra-

matic, and fascinating to any interested observers had there been any.

Moss mentions the possibility of a big freeze due to a breakdown of the North Atlantic Drift (the northern part of the Gulf Stream), but dismisses it in a single paragraph. He says that it is unlikely, but gives no reasons why it is less probable than any other scenario. He could just as well speculate on what our avifauna would be like under arctic conditions, and on the conservation measures needed to preserve endangered southern species. If one is banging the global-warming drum, it does not help to say too much about the alternative.

According to the Milankovitch cycles, widely considered to be the main controlling factors of ice-age fluctuations, we should now be experiencing a long-term trend of cooling. Northern-hemisphere glaciation has been the norm for about 90% of the last one million years, and the present interglacial (few experts consider it to be anything else) has already lasted longer than the four previous ones, according to Antarctic ice-core data (Petit *et al.* 1999). It should not be overlooked that the medieval warm period ended with a period of climatic instability that brought storms and floods. Does that sound familiar? Thanks to the heat brought by the North Atlantic Drift, the climate of Britain and northwest Europe is anomalously warm for its latitude, which is the same as that of Labrador, Lake Baikal, Kamchatka and southern Alaska. This makes it particularly difficult to predict future climate in the area, even a week ahead, let alone a decade or a century. The North Atlantic Drift is driven by the sinking of dense, cold, salty water; if the surface water becomes less dense, as a result of warming, or less salty, because of meltwater or run-off, the circulation stops. In the past, it has switched off abruptly (not just changed course) when surges of cold meltwater from decaying ice-sheets have destroyed the circulation. One such event occurred 8,200 years ago, during the Post-glacial Optimum. The Greenland ice-sheet is calving an increasing number of icebergs into the Labrador Current and the North Atlantic. More warmth and more precipitation on the ice-cap could increase the incidence of icebergs and meltwater, thereby causing another switch-off. Wood *et al.* (1999) suggest that warmer surface water would be sufficient to cause a partial shutdown in 30 years.

The composition of the British avifauna is not fixed. It has adapted to many changes in the past, and we cannot fix its present state for ever. The causes of climate change are many and varied, with complex interactions and feedbacks which are not clearly understood, and the outcome, as next year's weather, could hold some surprises. The odds against finding King Eiders *Somateria spectabilis* and Ivory Gulls *Pagophila eburnea* in London's St James' Park are not so long as many people would like to think.

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Large brood size and crèche formation of Egyptian Geese

The events described by Andrew Bloomfield (*Brit. Birds* 94: 88) may have been the first documented occurrence, but this is not the only example of crèche formation by the Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus* at Holkham Park, Norfolk.

In 1997, a pair of these geese (pair *A*) hatched 12 young on 10th April, but one of these had disappeared by 16th April. A second pair (pair *B*) hatched a brood of seven young on 15th April. In both cases, the parents led the young down to the large lake in the Park, as is the normal practice. By 17th April, five young from pair *B* had transferred themselves to pair *A*, giving the latter a combined brood of 16 chicks. The two remaining young of pair *B* were not seen again after 30th April, and their fate was unknown. Pair *A* eventually fledged seven (44%) of the combined brood of 16. With regard to clutch size, it may be noteworthy that, in February 1990, a nest containing 16 eggs was found in Holkham Park, but it is not known how many of these hatched, nor how many young survived.

The use of the term crèche formation is, however, incorrect in these instances, since they are examples of post-hatching brood amalgamation (Beauchamp 1997). This occurs when young from one family mix permanently with offspring from another family of the same species. A probable example of this involving Egyptian Geese was described by Eltringham (1974), who made the important point that these large broods are never accompanied by more than two adults, these presumed to be a mated pair. In true crèche formation, as occurs with the Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna*, the gatherings of young are usually accompanied by a number of adults.

Pre-hatching brood amalgamation, whereby females lay eggs in the nests of conspecifics, is also known among waterfowl. It is possible that the clutch of 16 Egyptian Goose eggs referred to above was an incidence of this.

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Andrew Bloomfield

197. Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus*, with young, Holkham Lake, Norfolk, June 1995.

Review of Alpine Swift records in Kent in 1915

At a meeting of the Kent Editorial and Records Committee, in September 2000, the decision was taken to reject a record of more than 100 Alpine Swifts *Tachymarptis melba* said to have been seen between 15th July and 3rd August 1915 at Kingsdown, Kent. This decision was reached after an extensive review of the record had been circulated among members of the Kent Rarities Panel.

Although other issues relating to the record (including weather patterns, past assessment practices, population size of the species, and observer details) were discussed, the birds' highly unlikely behaviour was the key factor in the decision to reject it.

On 15th July 1915, A. H. Mathew described a 'flight of about one hundred Alpine Swifts... [which] appeared to settle on the ground...'. Although he later stated that this behaviour 'would be unusual', and that, because of the undulating landscape, he could not be absolutely certain of having observed it, he appears to have confirmed the same behaviour on 3rd August 1915. On the latter date, he reported five Alpine Swifts, 'four of which were flying with two or three Common Swifts *Apus apus*' while the 'fifth flew up from a corn-field, within a few feet of where I stood, and must have been resting either upon the ground or on the stems of wheat'. The initial documentation of this observation can be found in *The Field* (21st August 1915) and in *British Birds* (9: 95).

Owing to the large number of individuals involved, this reassessment will cause a significant reduction in the number of pre-1958 records of Alpine Swift (given in the British Birds Rarities Committee's annual reports). This currently stands at 150 and should now be reduced to approximately 50.

I should like to thank Chris Bradshaw, Jon Braggs, Lee Evans, Mike Rogers and Ullrich Tigges for their correspondence regarding this review.

Phil Chantler
1 Kenilworth Close, St Margaret's Bay, Kent

Looking back in error

I do not think that the present editors need to apologise for repeating a mistake made 50 years ago in the date of the occurrence of a Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*. Any apology should come from me, since I was solely responsible for the issue of *British Birds* in question. That particular issue of *BB* was published during the interregnum when there was no officially appointed editor-in-chief. I cannot now explain how the mistake occurred. Perhaps the date was correctly printed as 1949 in the galley-proofs and then mysteriously changed to 1950 at the page-proof stage, where I overlooked it. Fifty years ago we did have to be alert to such possibilities. There was once an article correctly headed 'Passage of Black Terns [*Chlidonias niger*]' in the galley-proofs, which narrowly escaped publication as 'Passage of Black Terds' as printed in the page-proofs.

Returning to the present, the 'European Bird Report' contains a reference (*antea* – as we used to say in my time – p. 129) to two breeding records of the Common Shelduck *Tadorna tadorna* in Switzerland, the second of them at a place called Genf. I presume that this was how it appeared in the original German text, but I just wonder whether 'Genf' might refer to the city and canton better known to English-speaking readers as Geneva.

J. Duncan Wood
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EDITORIAL COMMENT We are happy to publish this informative letter from J. Duncan Wood, and are delighted to learn that somebody who so ably edited *BB* 50 years ago is still such a diligent reader of the present-day journal. As for Genf, it is quite correct that this is the German name for Geneva. The localities given in the 'European Bird Report' are, indeed, those that appear in the reports submitted for this feature by the various correspondents, a policy which we adopted several years ago. Perhaps we should reconsider this for certain well-known places, such as Geneva (known to French-speakers, incidentally, as Genève).

News and comment

Compiled by Bob Scott and Wendy Dickson

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of *British Birds*

Yellow Wagtail Study Group

The British Trust for Ornithology's Waterways Bird Survey has highlighted the rapid decline of breeding Yellow Wagtails *Motacilla flava* in riparian habitats. Some coastal populations appear stable, but in many areas the decrease has been dramatic. The Lune valley population in northwest Lancashire, for example, has decreased from 38 pairs to four pairs in 20 years. Kevin Briggs, Ian Court and Julian Hughes wish to set up a Yellow Wagtail Study Group to allow the interchange of information among individuals and groups from around the country. It is hoped that this will benefit the conservation of the species. The group is keen to contact as many Yellow Wagtail enthusiasts as possible, and intends to hold a meeting/workshop in September/October 2001 for all who may be interested. More information is available from Kevin Briggs, 2 Osborne Road, Farnborough, Hampshire GU14 6PT; e-mail: kbbriggs@yahoo.com (Kevin would also like to locate a copy of Chris Bell's report on Yellow Wagtail ecology at Elmley in 1988 – can you help?)

At last – a conviction for killing a Hen Harrier

There is not much doubt that the Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* is the most persecuted bird in Britain. Every year, we hear of reports from moorland areas of northern England and Scotland that nests have been destroyed and adult birds killed. Attempts at nest protection seem to have been singularly unsuccessful, while prosecutions are difficult to achieve. With a UK population of little more than 500 pairs, of which fewer than a dozen breed in England, the Hen Harrier is restricted to a fragment of what would be its normal range. There is little doubt that the continuing persecution is preventing the recolonisation of areas lost as breeding sites in the past.

At Elgin Sheriff Court, on 25th May 2001, Douglas Ross, a keeper from Craigmill Estate, was found guilty of shooting a Hen Harrier at Mill Buie, Morayshire, on 6th July 2000. This conviction is the first in the UK for the shooting of a Hen Harrier; Ross was fined £2,000. A recent report to Government, supported by land-owning, game-management and conservation organisations, rejected proposals to allow the killing of birds of prey in order to protect Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus* 'bags'. The report encouraged the development of non-lethal measures to reduce the numbers of grouse taken by harriers. Supplementary feeding of Hen Harriers during the breeding season can reduce predation on grouse by 85%, but this technique has not been widely adopted by shooting estates.

New Recorder for Outer Hebrides

Andrew Stevenson is taking over as the new Recorder for the Outer Hebrides. His address is Mill House, Snishival, South Uist HS8 5SG; tel. 01870 620317; e-mail: andrew.stevenson@SNH.gov.uk

Slavonian Grebe Newsletter

The Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus* continued to decline in 2000, and the numbers of breeding pairs (31) and breeding broods (15) are now at their lowest level since regular monitoring began, in the early 1970s. Productivity of those pairs that did breed in 2000 was, however, the highest ever recorded, at 1.06 young reared per pair on territory. Continuing research is underway to find out why the Scottish birds are faring so badly, and the latest newsletter includes news of what has been done, together with ideas and plans for the future. Unfortunately, foot-and-mouth disease is likely to make monitoring in 2001 difficult. Further details, and copies of the newsletter, are available from Stuart Benn, RSPB Scotland, Etive House, Beechwood Park, Inverness IV2 3BW.

Flamborough Head speaks again...

The avian history of England's greatest east-coast cape goes back to time immemorial but, in the modern boom of birding, topical bird-reporting from the Head has been intermittent. Happily, the Flamborough Ornithological Group (FOG) has now regirded its loins, and is embarking on a programme of substantial development, culminating, it hopes, with the acceptance of the Head as a national Bird Observatory. The FOG millennium report was launched at a reception at the North Star Hotel, North Landing, on 23rd May this year, when Flamborough devotee Ian Wallace was the main speaker. We wish Flamborough well in its attempts to become part of the UK's Bird Observatory network. Further details of the Group are available from the Secretary, Jenny Butterworth, 5 Coastguard Cottages, Lighthouse Road, Flamborough, Bridlington YO15 1AW.

Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland

BirdWatch Ireland and RSPB Northern Ireland have agreed a list of priority bird species for conservation action in Ireland. All the species that occur regularly in Ireland are divided among three lists: *Red List*, species of high conservation concern (18 species); *Amber List*, species of medium conservation concern (77 species); and *Green List*, species whose conservation status is considered favourable. To be included on the *Red List* a species must meet one of the following criteria:

- its breeding population or range has declined by more than 50% in the last 25 years
- its breeding population has undergone a significant decline since 1900
- it is of global conservation concern

The current *Red List* species are: Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*, Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*, Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*, Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus*, Grey Partridge *Perdix perdix*, Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*, Corn Crake *Crex crex*, Northern Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*, Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*, Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*, Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*, Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*, Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*, Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* and Corn Bunting *Miliaria calandra*. BirdWatch Ireland and RSPB NI have agreed that they will focus their priority work on all but four of the *Red List* species (excluding Black-necked Grebe, Red Grouse, Common Quail and Corn Bunting), together with two from the *Amber List*: European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria* and Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*. Further details are available from BirdWatch Ireland, 8 Longford Place, Monkstown, Co. Dublin (make sure that you have a look at their new-look quarterly magazine *Wings*), or RSPB Northern Ireland, Belvoir Park Forest, Belfast BT8 7QT.

Point Pelee Natural History News

Point Pelee in southern Ontario, Canada, has international fame for the numbers of migrant American wood-warblers (Parulidae) that pass through in May, but visiting birders may not appreciate the wider importance of the national park and surrounding area as a migration stopover. For example, an incredible 10,000 Golden-crowned Kinglets *Regulus satrapa* were estimated to be present on 7th October 2000, while five Redheads *Aythya americana* seen on 30th January 2001 were early spring migrants.

To promote this Canadian national park, a quarterly newsletter, *Point Pelee Natural History News*, has been launched. A mix of recent bird records is supported by accounts of rarities (with black-and-white photos) and early and late arrival dates. Issue one reports that two Whooping Cranes *Grus americana* were present on 21st November 2000. Originating from a Florida-based introduction scheme, the birds were not seen in the national park, but were known to have been present there thanks to radio-tracking.

The emphasis on migration is reflected in coverage of non-avian wildlife, such as a summary of butterfly sightings – a total of 60 species was seen in 2000 – and analysis of an invasion of Zebra Swallowtails *Eurytides marcellus*.

You can subscribe to *Point Pelee Natural History News* for US$15 a year. Further details are available from: The Friends of Point Pelee, 1118 Point Pelee Drive, Leamington, Ontario, Canada, N8H 3V4; e-mail: fopp@wincom.net (*Contributed by Tony Blake*)

An endangered species?

We have, over the years, encouraged our readers to support their local bird clubs and societies (and, indeed, those that they may encounter while birding away from home) by being members, attending meetings, submitting records, etc. There is concern, however, that the county (or local) bird clubs generally may be in serious decline. We hear from many quarters that membership is falling and attendance at meetings declining, while submission of records is, at best, standing still and not reflecting the growth in birdwatching interests. There are, of course, some successful clubs still operating, and it would be sensible for clubs and societies to learn from each other. The British Trust for Ornithology and the 'Bird Clubs Partnership' is one positive step, but the West Midland Bird Club has come up with a novel initiative to address the situation. It has contacted bird clubs throughout the UK with the suggestion that they all meet somewhere in the Midlands, perhaps in the spring of 2002. It has posed the following questions: Are we failing our membership? Have we become too entrenched in our views? Are there views that we can exchange and learn from? This seems a project worthy of support, and further details are available from Hilary Brittain, 13 Lawford Avenue, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS14 9XJ.

5,317 bird-trapping sites

Recent high-profile publicity has focused on some appalling reports of bird-trapping activities in Cyprus. We are all aware that, throughout the Mediterranean basin, the trapping of migrant species is a common practice, but we probably like to think that the situation is improving. We should also be aware that bird-conservation bodies in the countries concerned are often fighting a terrible battle, one that would dishearten many of us very quickly, and they all welcome our support from farther north in Europe. BirdLife Malta has just completed a census of bird-trapping sites in Malta and Gozo. The survey was carried out using detailed aerial photographs of the islands, and revealed a minimum of 5,317 sites (3,796 in Malta and 1,521 in Gozo). This means a density of almost 17 trapping sites per square kilometre! The distribution, however, is not even. Sites are mostly located around the coast, especially on south-facing cliffs, sometimes at unbelievable concentrations. Further details are available from BirdLife Malta, 57/28 Triq Rigord, Ta'Xbiex, MSD 12, or from its website (www.birdlifemalta.org).

The European Commission and Lammergeier

For a full assessment of the current status of the Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus* in Europe, it is worth consulting Issue 13 of *Natura 2000*, the European Commission Nature Newsletter.

Copies are available from DG ENV.D.2, BU-9 3/204, European Commission, 200 Rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium, or at http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/nature/home.htm

New Italian rarities committee

Owing to the rising popularity of birdwatching as a hobby in Italy, the numbers of foreign birders visiting the country, and (as a consequence) the increase in the number of rarities observed and reported, a new Italian rarities committee, the CIR, has been created, with the support and encouragement of the Association of European Rarities Committees. The CIR will now assess all records of rare birds observed in Italy. Birders are invited to visit the CIR homepage, which includes a list of the relevant species, at http://www.storianaturale.org/cir

In addition to recent records of rare species, the submission of older records would also be welcomed by the new committee. Visiting birders should consult the website for information about sites to visit, and for details of how to submit their records. (*Contributed by Andrea Corso/CIR*)

New guidelines from the Israel Rarities & Distribution Committee

At a meeting of the Israel Rarities & Distribution Committee, on 7th May 2001, the criteria for recording rare birds in Israel were revised. The key objectives of the new guidelines are to improve the standard of rarity-recording in Israel, and to speed up the assessment process. Each record will now be voted upon by at least five of the six members of the committee, who will meet at least three times per year. It is hoped that the committee's findings will be published on a regular basis. In general, the committee will consider species recorded in Israel fewer than 25 times up to and including the publication of *The Birds of Israel* (Shirihai 1996). Full details of the new guidelines, and a list of species requiring a description, are available from James P. Smith, Israel Rarities & Distribution Committee, c/o Kibbutz Lotan, D. N. Chevel Eilot, 88855 Israel; e-mail: jameslotan@yahoo.com

At the same meeting, several outstanding records were discussed and evaluated. The accepted records will appear in a future 'European Bird Report', published in *British Birds*. (*Contributed by James Smith*)

Helmeted Guineafowl in Bulgaria

The southwest corner of Bulgaria, bordering Macedonia and Greece, is, in places, very hot, dry and arid. Unlike much of the country, the area around Rupite receives very little rain and is largely frost-free. Indeed, it is an area of old volcanoes and impressive hot springs. Many years ago (the actual date is probably unknown), a small number of Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris* were kept as domestic fowl within a walled garden at the Sveta Petka Church. The birds bred successfully, and some managed to escape over the wall and, quite clearly, found the surrounding habitat of grassland and agricultural crops very much to their liking. A feral population was soon established, and a considerable number of free-winged individuals now live in the area. The birds are continuing to nest and rear young, and no further guineafowl are held captive nearby. It seems highly likely that the species has now developed a self-supporting feral population. Long (1981, *Introduced Birds of the World*) records a number of failed introduction attempts in southern France as the only European trials at establishment of this species. The Bulgarian situation may well indicate a new species for that country, and an addition to the European List.

Reviews

PIGEONS AND DOVES

By David Gibbs, Eustace Barnes & John Cox.
Pica Press, Sussex, 2001.
615 pages; 76 colour plates; 314 species illustrated in colour; 309 maps.
ISBN 1-873403-60-7.
Hardback, £38.00.

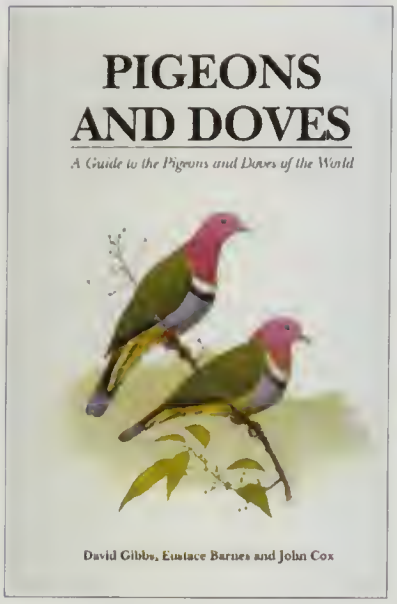
Everyone is familiar with pigeons and doves; indeed, one species (Rock Pigeon *Columba livia*, as it is named in the book) occurs in a wild or feral state across vast tracts of every continent except Antarctica. Unfortunately, nobody can claim familiarity with all of the 319 species covered. Not only are half of them confined to islands, but many are threatened, several are critically endangered, and at least 11 are extinct, including the Dodo *Raphus cucullatus* and Passenger Pigeon *Ectopistes migratorius*.

Pigeons and Doves contains sections entitled Contents, Acknowledgements, Introduction, Scope and Layout of the Book, Topography, Bibliography, and Index, but it is the Colour Plates and the Systematic Section, 92% of the pages, that will be the most frequently consulted.

The 76 full-page colour plates are sure to attract more than the odd 'coo' of appreciation. They are all of a high standard, while a number of them are quite superb; habitat backdrops add perspective and atmosphere to many and enhance their eye-catching appeal. On average, each one covers four species and contains eight large, boldly painted images of birds at rest, and five or six smaller images of flying birds. Each bird is coded, and is captioned on a facing page with its age and, where relevant, its sex and with comments on the species' range, structure and plumage.

The Systematic Section contains the species accounts, each one being treated under the headings Identification, Voice, Habits, Habitat, Status and Distribution, Description, Measurements, Geographical Variation, and References, and including a distribution map. Calls and, where relevant, differences from similar species and dissimilarities between races have received particularly detailed treatment, while the comments on population and status, and the single paragraphs dealing with movements, food, display and breeding are both interesting and informative.

In common with most books, *Pigeons and Doves* is not free from errors, but it was disappointing to discover quite so many so easily. Presumed typographical mistakes are evident in the list of contents, within the page references for both plates and species accounts, and in the captions to the plates, where one of the codes is incorrect and there are references to maps that do not exist. Spot-checks on the maps themselves revealed ranges that are too extensive for Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur* in the British Isles, and too restricted for Laughing Dove *S. senegalensis* in Morocco and, more glaringly, Israel. The least excusable error, however, concerns the references which end each species account. Of an impressive 56 references for White-winged Dove *Zenaida asiatica*, for example, only four are listed in the Bibliography section; many other species also have numerous untraceable references.



So, as the book contains a not insignificant number of errors, and is quite expensive for its type, should you buy a copy? Well, if you own the only other illustrated work which covers all of the pigeons and doves, volume 4 of the *Handbook of the Birds of the World*, you probably will not wish to. Otherwise, you really should give it serious consideration, since the group includes several charismatic species, many threatened ones, and even more with a very limited distribution. Furthermore, the book's text is authoritative, particularly so when dealing with identification and distribution; and, above all, its splendid colour illustrations are both accurate and attractive.

Peter Lansdown

SHORT REVIEW

Collins Bird Guide

By Lars Svensson & Peter J. Grant; illustrated by Killian Mullarney & Dan Zetterström; translated by David Christie.
(HarperCollins, London, 2000. 400 pages; 3,500 paintings; about 700 distribution maps. ISBN 0-00-710082-5. Hardback, £29.99.)

Now republished in a larger format, so that the illustrations may be properly appreciated, this superb field guide (reviewed in *Brit. Birds* 92: 132–133) becomes even better. The opportunity has been taken to correct one or two minor errors in the original text, which otherwise appears unchanged compared with the original. Many birdwatchers will doubtless wish to purchase this handsome larger-format edition to enjoy at home.

Richard Chandler

BIRD CENSUS TECHNIQUES

By Colin J. Bibby, Neil D. Burgess, David A. Hill & Simon H. Mustoe. 2nd edition. Academic Press, London, 2000.
302 pages; black-and-white illustrations.
ISBN 0-12-095831-7.
Hardback, £35.00.

The first edition of this book, published in 1992, provided a comprehensive guide to counting and mapping birds and their habitats, and became something of a 'bible' for bird-surveyors. As in the original, the text of the revised version deals first with how to select the most appropriate census method, which is a crucial starting point given the bewildering range of methods available. Separate chapters are allotted to the three main methods of assessing bird numbers and distributions, namely, territory-mapping, line transects, and point counts. Subsequent chapters focus on ways of counting species for which these methods are inappropriate (e.g. rare, nocturnal, colonial, and migrating species), and on catching and marking birds. The reader is carefully guided from the practicalities of the field methods through to the analysis and interpretation of results, and the techniques are usefully illustrated with a few, well-chosen, examples. The last two chapters cover methods for distribution studies (including atlas work) and measuring bird habitats.

There are three key improvements in this second edition. The first, and the most obvious, is a valuable new chapter entitled 'Relative measures for bird communities in habitats with high species richness'. This addresses the particular problems of surveying birds in tropical habitats where high, dense canopies often support large numbers of species, many of which occur at low densities. The second is an extensive revision of the sections covering distance sampling, a method of analysis that allows density estimates to be generated from census data. The third is the size of the reference list, which is almost twice the size of that in the first edition. Overall, the second edition is an important and substantial update of an extremely valuable book. It is a 'must' for any bird-surveyors, volunteer and professional alike, who do not have the first edition – and probably also for those of you who do have.

Juliet Vickery

BIRDS OF NEPAL

By Richard Grimmett, Carol Inskipp & Tim Inskipp. Christopher Helm, A & C Black, London, 2000. 288 pages; 110 colour plates.
ISBN 0-7136-5166-0.
Softback, £16.99.

This excellent little field guide follows *Birds of Bhutan* as another spin-off from the same authors' widely acclaimed *Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*.

All the species which occur regularly in Nepal are illustrated in 110 beautifully produced colour plates, painted by a range of top artists. The text comprises a concise description of the key identification features in each of the main plumages, voice (although not for all species), altitudinal range, distribution and status. This faces the corresponding plates in an easy-reference format. The book also contains a comprehensive introduction to the key birdwatching sites and habitats.

As with the parent guide, the colour plates lie behind the book's appeal. By and large, they are superb. Presumably, lack of space dictated the omission of some variation on the postures illustrated – for example, it would have been nice to have seen flight illustrations of the high-altitude pheasants (Phasianidae), given that this is how they are typically seen. However, it is only when the plates are compared directly with those in the previous key reference, Ali & Ripley's *A Pictorial Guide to the Birds of the Indian Subcontinent*, that one can truly appreciate what an advance this new book represents for the visiting birder. This book will significantly enhance your chances of solving some of the traditional identification conundrums, such as the bush warblers *Cettia/Bradypterus* and female rosefinches *Carpodacus*.



Its attractive design and lightweight, compact format are also major benefits. This is a true field guide: simple to refer to at a glance and easy to carry around in the field.

It is good to see that, reflecting the authors' close involvement with bird conservation in Nepal, the book has been produced in collaboration with some of the country's growing band of ornithologists. In pushing back the frontiers of bird identification in Nepal, it will also, it is to be hoped, assist the development of conservation priorities among the country's fascinating and diverse avifauna.

Guy Thompson

BIRDS, MAMMALS & REPTILES OF THE GALAPAGOS ISLANDS

By Andy Swash & Rob Still. Pica Press, A & C Black, London, 2000. 168 pages; 53 colour plates; 78 colour distribution maps. ISBN 1-873403-82-8. Paperback, £16.95.

In this comprehensive identification guide to all the birds, mammals and reptiles ever recorded in the Galapagos Islands, the latest digital-image technology is used to produce a field guide which, while not unattractive, is a little too kitsch and flashy for me. After a disappointingly short introduction, the individual species accounts follow. Every species is represented by two or more photographs, which are usually of good quality, and a short text that covers identification, voice and behaviour. The identification section is adequate, but I found the text on behaviour to be much too short for my liking. In particular, I would have preferred to see a more thorough coverage of the endemic species, because, in the main, these are the ones for which visitors come to the islands; and less emphasis on the vagrants, which are well covered elsewhere. The section on reptiles and mammals is good, but surely no Blainville's Beaked Whales *Mesoplodon densirostris* are ever as bright red as in the illustration.

Although this guide fails to convey the magic of these islands, it does give the visitor a good overall picture of all the species of bird, mammal and reptile that occur there.

Mark Van Beirs

GALAPAGOS DIARY: A COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE ARCHIPELAGO'S BIRDLIFE

By Hermann Heinzel & Barnaby Hall. Christopher Helm, A & C Black, London, 2000. 272 pages; 640 colour photos; illustrations; maps. ISBN 0-7136-5434-1. Paperback, £16.99.

This delightful book was produced after a single, prolonged visit to the islands and consists of two parts. The first half comprises a tour through this spectacular archipelago in which a thorough description is given of all the different islands with their different habitats and wildlife, with special emphasis on the unique birdlife and its strange ecological adaptations. The birds are treated as part of an ecosystem, and this makes the reader understand what the Galapagos are all about. The text is excellent, and enhanced by many lovely drawings and fine photographs. The second part is the real field guide, in which every bird species that occurs regularly is enthusiastically described in great detail, while many alluring sketches and paintings skilfully illustrate the distinctive identification and behavioural features of each species.

This book is a personal account of the author's visit, and it really manages to convey that special magic feeling that overwhelms every visitor to these enchanted islands.

Mark Van Beirs

SHORT REVIEWS

Nature Contested: environmental history in Scotland and northern England since 1600

By T. C. Smout. (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2000. 210 pages; black-and-white photographs. Hardback: ISBN 0-7486-1410-9; price £45.00. Paperback: ISBN 0-7486-1411-7; price £14.99.)

In essence, this book describes the tension that has existed for the last 400 years between those who wish to utilise the land for economic gain and those who wish to enjoy the environment, its landscapes and its wildlife. Successive chapters consider woodland, soil, water and hill-land, and bring us up to the present day, when much of our existing countryside has been defaced and yet large estates and agriculture face financial ruin. It provides a worthy read for anyone who has more than a passing interest in the future shape of, and sustainable use of, our countryside.

Paul Harvey

The Charm of Birds

By Sir Edward Grey. (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 2001. 296 pages; black-and-white illustrations. ISBN 0-575-07058-7. Hardback, 18.99.)

Sir Edward Grey – Viscount Grey of Fallodon – is perhaps best remembered as the longest-serving Foreign Secretary of the twentieth century. Grey also had a passion for ornithology, and indeed conservation and the wider countryside, and one of the most important and prolific bodies for scientific field ornithology in Europe bears his name, the Edward Grey Institute at Oxford University.

First published in 1927, *The Charm of Birds* was an immediate popular success, but has been unavailable for many years. It deals mostly, but not exclusively, with birdsong, and contains a great deal of careful observation, sensitively conveyed to the reader. This new edition is an attractive re-issue, and provides a very pleasant bed-time read.

RR

Monthly Marathon

The long pointed wings and long, tapering, forked tail of the bird in Monthly Marathon number 177 (plate 109, repeated here as plate 198) will have been readily identifiable as a swift (Apodidae) to all but the most inexperienced of observers. The photograph immediately brought to mind one of my favourite quotes from a recent ornithological publication, that being 'At present state of knowledge [it is] probably unwise to identify specifically any all-dark swift in the field in E and NE Africa' (*Birds of Africa* Vol. 3, page 220). Fortunately, since this competition is restricted to birds on the Western Palearctic List, we have more of a chance with it. It does indeed look all dark, and the lack of a white rump immediately rules out Little Swift *Apus affinis*, White-rumped Swift *A. caffer* and Pacific Swift *A. pacificus*. We can see something of the underparts, and the darkness of these combined with the lack of any medium brown in the upperparts also readily eliminates Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba*. Thinking of extreme vagrants, Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica* and White-throated Needletail Swift *Hirundapus caudacutus* can be ruled out by the forked tail. This leaves us with three all-dark swifts: Common Swift *A. apus*, Plain Swift *A. unicolor* and Pallid Swift *A. pallidus*.



Harry Lehto

198. Plain Swift *Apus unicolor*, La Palma, Canary Islands, June 1999.

Dealing with the last of those three first, no Pallid Swift would ever look this dark, and most would show much more white on the throat. Common Swift is the species with which many of us are most familiar, of course, so how does this individual shape up for that species? It is superficially similar, but the tail perhaps looks a bit long and the fork a bit deep, and there appears to be very little white on the throat. The pale edgings to the greater and median coverts seem to be giving the wing a rather scaly appearance, not typical of Common Swift, but this may be some kind of reflection or photographic effect rather than truly pale feathers, unless the bird is in very fresh plumage. The eastern race *pekinensis* of Common Swift is slightly paler and greyer than the western nominate race, but structurally it is much the same. All of the features of this mystery bird do, however, fit Plain Swift, and the background is also a suggestive clue. It appears to show a rocky area with no obvious vegetation, as might be found in North Africa or the Middle East.

In the field, the identification of Plain Swift is helped enormously by the fact that the observer is normally standing on one of the Atlantic islands off Northwest Africa, as was the case here, for this is indeed a Plain Swift. This individual was photographed by Harry Lehto on La Palma, Canary Islands, in June 1999. Although the species is sometimes thought of as an Atlantic-islands endemic, this is not the case, since many individuals leave the islands during the winter months, although the exact wintering area remains unknown. Scattered records from Morocco even suggest that small numbers may breed there.



199. 'Monthly Marathon'. Photo no. 179. Twenty-seventh stage in eleventh 'Marathon' or first stage in twelfth. Identify the species. Read the rules (see page 55), then send in your answer *on a postcard* to Monthly Marathon, c/o The Banks, Mountfield, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY, *or by e-mail* to editor@britishbirds.co.uk, *to arrive by 3rd September 2001*.

Its true status away from its island haunts is masked by the difficulty of identifying this species with any real confidence outside its normal range.

Predictably, perhaps, virtually all the entrants plumped either for Plain Swift or for Common Swift, and the majority were correct, with 75% identifying the bird as a Plain Swift. For the second month in succession, there is a significant change in the leader board. The leading group is now down to three, comprising Peter Lansdown, Andy Mears and Peter Sunesen, all of whom are on 12-in-a-row, followed by Jon Holt, who has 11 consecutive correct answers to his credit. Our commiserations go to Jakob Sunesen, who dropped out this month with a nonetheless highly commendable sequence of 11 correct answers. Since the present competition requires a winning sequence of at least 13 correct answers, we could have a winner next month, but only if two of our leading trio slip up. Assuming that they do not, the present competition will continue until we have an outright winner. The marathon continues...

David Fisher

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Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary of unchecked reports covers June 2001.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* Stithian's Reservoir (Cornwall), 21st June; Tyninghame Bay (Lothian), 21st-22nd June; Saltholme (Cleveland), 24th-26th June. **Green-winged Teal** *Anas carolinensis* Titchwell (Norfolk), 13th June. **King Eider** *Somateria spectabilis* Greenisland (Co. Antrim), 26th-28th June. **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* Oare Marshes (Kent), 26th June. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* Unst (Shetland), 16th June. **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* Old Moor NR (South Yorkshire), 17th-18th June. **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* Low Newton (Northumberland), 24th-25th June.

Daily Log: May

Small numbers of raptors were recorded by several observatories in May, during spells of fine weather. **Marsh Harriers** *Circus aeruginosus* were seen regularly along the east coast, with peak counts of three at Filey (North Yorkshire) on 12th, six at Spurn (East Yorkshire) on 12th, and six at Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) on 18th. Portland (Dorset) reported exceptional numbers of **Hobbies** *Falco subbuteo*, with an all-island total of 43 for the month, while one or two were reported on several dates at Spurn, Gibraltar Point, Landguard (Suffolk) and Sandwich Bay (Kent); the last site, in fact, recorded seven on 19th. One or two raptor sightings were a feature of most days on Bardsey (Gwynedd), including **European Honey-buzzard** *Pernis apivorus*, all three British-breeding species of harrier, **Northern Goshawk** *Accipiter gentilis* and **Hobby**, all of which are scarce visitors to the island.

A number of sites recorded the passage of northbound waders during May. At Sandwich Bay, there were counts of 130 **Whimbrels** *Numenius phaeopus* north on 5th and 106 **Sanderlings** *Calidris alba* on 7th, while, to the west, Bardsey logged 65 **Whimbrels** on 2nd, and there were 200 **Sanderlings**, 30 **Whimbrels** and 200 **Turnstones** *Arenaria interpres* at Walney (Cumbria) on 6th. Peak counts of most species at the last site occurred later in the month, with 600 **Great Ringed Plovers** *Charadrius hiaticula* on 19th and 500 **Sanderlings** on 20th. Gibraltar Point recorded **Whimbrel** passage on several dates, notably 105 on 11th and 95 on 19th. Farther north, there were 144 **Sanderlings** on North Ronaldsay (Orkney) on 9th and 331 on 21st, with 206 **Great Ringed Plovers** and 180 **Turnstones** there on 25th.

In terms of quantity, the passage of **Common Swifts** *Apus apus* and hirundines was prominent in the reports of many observatories. Spurn in particular recorded a series of impressive movements, and there were ten days during the month when 600 or more **Barn Swallows** *Hirundo rustica* moved through, with peaks of 1,200 on 12th, 1,000 on 13th, 2,700 on 16th and 1,500 on 27th. On 16th, there were also 192 **Sand Martins** *Riparia riparia*, while the largest counts of **Common Swifts** and **House Martins** *Delichon urbica* were at the end of the month, with 766 of the former on 27th, and 330 **House Martins**

200. Right, top: White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*, Saltholme, Cleveland, June 2001.

201. Right, below: Male Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*, Minsmere RSPB Reserve, Suffolk, May 2001.



Brian Clasper



Robin Chittenden

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* Dungeness (Kent), 10th June. **Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica* Blakeney (Norfolk), 23rd June. **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* Normandy Marsh (Hampshire), then Stanpit Marsh (Dorset), 12th June; Buckenham Marsh, then Cantley, and then Breydon Water (all Norfolk), 16th-17th June. **White-winged Blaek Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* Martin Mere (Lancashire), 18th June; Marshside (Lancashire), 19th and 21st June. **Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba* Near Docking (Norfolk), 11th June. **Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus* Bryher, then Tresco (Scilly), 22nd June. **Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica*

on 26th, 711 on 27th and 550 on 28th. All the above were southerly movements. Gibraltar Point mustered peak counts of 150 **Barn Swallows** south on 26th and 270 **Common Swifts** south on the following day, 27th, while the main movement at Holme (Norfolk) was westerly, with 500 **Barn Swallows** on 19th and 300 **Common Swifts** on 27th. On the south coast, Dungeness (Kent) managed no more than 130 **Barn Swallows** on 3rd, though Portland reported counts of 500 on two days, and 1,000 on 3rd. Moderate numbers of hirundines passed through Bardsey on most days, with peak counts of **Barn Swallows** being 402 on 11th and 326 on 29th, with 141 **House Martins** on 22nd. Farther north, more modest counts of **Barn Swallows** were made, with monthly maxima of 106 at Calf of Man (Isle of Man) on 6th, 100 at Walney on 12th-13th, 35 on North Ronaldsay on 31st and 100 on Fair Isle (Shetland) on 23rd.

Markedly different fortunes in terms of the numbers of small passerines were experieneed. Bardsey managed reasonable quantity and variety of warblers throughout the month, with, for example, 87 **Sedge Warblers** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* and 102 **Common Whitethroats** *Sylvia commmis* on 16th. The same was true of Portland until 11th, during which time there were four daily counts of 200 or more (max. 300) **Willow Warblers** *Phylloscopus trochilus*. Dungeness, by contrast, registered extremely low numbers of virtually all passerine migrants (the highest count of **Willow Warblers** was just 12), while a similar story applied for much of the east coast, particularly for Filey, North Ronaldsay and Fair Isle. For example, North Ronaldsay failed to record **Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin* at all, while there were just two individuals in the Fair Isle log. More generally, there was a lack of drift migrants on the east coast, both of commoner species such as **Tree Pipit** *Anthus trivialis*, **Common Redstart** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, **Whinehat** *Saxicola rubetra* and **Pied Flycatcher** *Ficedula hypoleuca*, and of the more 'regular' scarce migrants such as **Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica*, **Ieterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina*, **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio* and **Common Rosefineh** *Carpodacus erythrinus*.

The above summary of unchecked news was supplied by the Bird Observatories Council's 'grapevine', courtesy of the British Trust for Ornithology



Tim Loseby

202. Female Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*, Fair Isle, Shetland, May 2001.



G. Cockill

203. Rosy Starling *Sturnus rosens*, Wadebridge, Cornwall, June 2001.



Tim Loseby

204. Adult male Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*, Fair Isle, Shetland, May 2001.

Spurn (East Yorkshire), 19th June. **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* Fair Isle (Shetland), 16th-17th June. **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* Musselburgh (Lothian), 22nd-24th June. **Rosy Starling** *Sturnus rosens* At least 21 new arrivals during this period: near Lichfield (Staffordshire), 11th-12th June; Paignton (Devon), 11th-17th June; Illogan (Cornwall), 11th June; Falmouth (Cornwall), 12th June; Landguard (Suffolk), 12th June; Morfa Nefyn (Gwynedd), 13th June; Louth (Lincolnshire), 13th-15th June; near Bridport (Dorset), 14th-18th June; Wadebridge (Cornwall), 14th-17th June; Port St Mary (Isle of Man), 16th June; Fair Isle, 16th-17th June; St Ouen's Pond (Jersey), 16th-18th June; Strumble Head (Dyfed), 17th June; Girdle Ness (Northeast Scotland), 18th June; Newquay (Cornwall), 18th-23rd June; Dublin (Co. Dublin), 20th June; Exhall (Warwickshire), 21st-24th June; Durness (Highland), 21st-23rd June; York (North Yorkshire), 22nd June; Aberdeen (Northeast Scotland), 22nd June; Walton-on-the-Naze (Essex), 22nd June; near Pewsey (Wiltshire), 24th June. **Arctic Redpoll** *Carduelis hornemanni* Fetlar (Shetland), 11th June. **Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala* Fair Isle, 16th June.

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Rare breeding birds in the United Kingdom in 1999

Malcolm Ogilvie and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel

This is the twenty-seventh annual report of the Rare Breeding Birds Panel, which presents details of the status of Britain's rarest breeding birds. Most totals are set out by county, region or, occasionally, country; only rarely are actual localities given. This is done in order to minimise the continuing threat from egg-collectors, and, in some cases, to reduce the risk of disturbance from over-zealous birdwatchers. Where county names are given, these are grouped within the Panel's ten regions (see page 346).

The Panel

The current (June 2001) membership of the Panel is: Dr C. J. Bibby, Dr H. Q. P. Crick, Dr I. Francis, Mrs A. J. Smith, Dr K. W. Smith, D. A. Stroud and Dr M. A. Ogilvie (Secretary). At the end of 2000, we said goodbye and thank-you to the two longest-serving members: Dr J. T. R. Sharrock, who was a member of the original Panel formed by the RSPB in 1968, prior to its reconstitution as an autonomous body in 1973; and Dr L. A. Batten, who joined in 1978. Dr Ian Francis was recruited to the Panel in 2000. The individual members of the Panel serve in a personal capacity, but three are also able to reflect the interests and needs of the respective sponsoring bodies. The work of the Panel is supported financially by the JNCC (on behalf of the country conservation agencies) and the RSPB, with additional support coming from the BTO and *British Birds*.

Coverage

The Panel collects records from the whole of the United Kingdom, including Northern Ireland, but not from the Republic of Ireland. Coverage in 1999 was excellent, with at least some records (including nil returns) received from every county and region. The majority of the records included in this report are submitted by County Recorders, with additional data from Schedule I licence forms received from the three country agencies. With regard to the acceptance of records for publication, it is the Panel's policy to follow the views of the appropriate County Recorder and local committee, and only very exceptionally to publish records which have not been vetted in this way.

Review of the year 1999

This was the fourth year in a row in which reports from all parts of the country spoke of bad weather disrupting the breeding season, with heavy rain and floods in some areas and unseasonable snow and storms in others, while high water levels and high tides were responsible for destroying nests, eggs and chicks.

Just as in 1998, the breeding success of Black-throated Divers *Gavia arctica* was poor, with high water levels and bad weather to blame, although Red-throated Divers *G. stellata* in Orkney and Shetland fared rather better. There was a further drop in the numbers and, especially, the breeding success of Slavonian Grebes *Podiceps*

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auritus. On a more optimistic note, Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris* showed a continued improvement, with more booming males at a greater number of localities, and more young fledged, than in either of the previous two years, proof that the species is responding well to habitat management.

Among the wildfowl, although there were fewer reports of Northern Pintail *Anas acuta* compared with 1998, the number of confirmed breeding pairs was the highest recorded since the Panel started collecting records in 1973. Garganeys *A. querquedula* arrived in Britain in lower numbers than in either of the two previous years, although their distribution was not affected. A pair of Greater Scaups *Aythya marila* breeding in Northern Ireland was only the second such record for the Province.

The populations of Red Kites *Milvus milvus*, both natural and re-established, marked time in England and Wales, this being due at least partly to the effects of bad weather on breeding success, although there was a further increase in Scotland. The re-established White-tailed Eagles *Haliaeetus albicilla* had a slightly less successful season than in 1998. Although the count of breeding Ospreys *Pandion haliaetus* continues to rise, the number of young produced in 1999 was lower, with several failures caused by high winds and heavy rain. Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* also produced fewer young than last year, but Montagu's Harriers *C. pygargus* managed a slight improvement.

The first complete census ever of Spotted Crakes *Porzana porzana* showed the value of intensive effort, since the total of singing males was more than twice the maximum number previously recorded. Corn Crakes *Crex crex* had a mixed year, with a welcome increase on a number of Scottish islands, yet declines on others.

Among the waders, Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* were affected by predation and high tides at some colonies. The steady increase in the numbers of breeding pairs of Stone-curlews *Burhinus oedicnemus* continued, although the number of fledged young fell very slightly. Black-tailed Godwits *Limosa limosa*, on the other hand, did well, despite some flooding, with the numbers of both breeding pairs and fledged young the highest for several years. Only the second confirmed breeding by Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* took place, in Scotland (the first was in 1959, also in Scotland). There was something of a recovery in the breeding population of Red-necked Phalaropes *Phalaropus lobatus* on Fetlar, Shetland, although numbers were still well below the peak of a few years ago, while breeding or probable breeding occurred at three other locations in Scotland.

Mediterranean Gulls *Larus melanocephalus* bred in greater numbers, and at more locations, but no hybridisation was observed this year. A pair of Yellow-legged Gulls *L. cachinnans* bred, for the second year running, as did two mixed pairs of Yellow-legged and Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus*. The number of breeding Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* increased slightly.

The numbers of both Barn Owls *Tyto alba* and Common Kingfishers *Alcedo atthis* were lower than in 1998, and the Panel once again appeals to county bird clubs to consider censusing the latter species.

A pair of Wrynecks *Jynx torquilla* bred for only the fourth time in the 1990s, while breeding by Horned Larks *Eremophila alpestris* was strongly suspected. For the first time since 1983, no records of Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* were received. There was, however, better news of Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* than in recent years, with more singing males recorded than for the last five years, although once again no proved breeding. Marsh Warblers *Acrocephalus palustris* increased slightly compared with 1998 records, although for the first time for a great many years none was found in the species' former stronghold of Worcestershire.

Bearded Tits *Panurus biarmicus* have been reported to be in decline in recent years, but almost complete surveys throughout the species' range in the UK suggest that it is still present in very similar numbers to those found at the time of the 1992 census. Golden Orioles *Oriolus oriolus* had their worst breeding season since 1986, but, to conclude on a positive note, a pair of Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* bred in Scotland, and there were records of Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* from five locations after only a single record in the last three years.

Conservation uses of Panel data

It is the Panel's policy to make data available for relevant conservation uses. As well as site-specific information (e.g. for the review of Special Protection Areas by JNCC and the country conservation agencies), national data sets have been used by the RSPB for planning surveys. The Panel's data have also played a key role in reviews of birds of conservation concern and national population estimates, together with the development and implementation of recovery plans for certain species.

Publications

The bibliography at the end of this report gives details of published results of censuses and surveys of the numbers and distribution of Panel species, many of these making use of the Panel's data.

Acknowledgments

The Panel, and in particular its Secretary, very gratefully acknowledges the willing co-operation of all the many county, regional and local recorders throughout the United Kingdom. Jake Allsopp and the Golden Oriole Group, Colin Crooke, Peter E. Davis and the Welsh Kite Trust, Roy Dennis, Dr Andy Evans, Ian Carter, Dr Gillian Gilbert, Dr Rhys Green, Bob Image, Malcolm Henderson, Julianne Evans and Dr Ron Summers all supplied information on their particular specialities, and grateful thanks are due to them. We are grateful to the licensing officers of the three country agencies for their ready co-operation in supplying information: John Holmes (English Nature), John Ralston (Scottish Natural Heritage) and Sian Whitehead (Countryside Commission for Wales). We should also like to express our sincere thanks to all the very many individuals whose fieldwork produced the observations that form the basis for this report.

Key to geographical regions used in this report

Note that recent further reorganisation of local government throughout Britain has made some of the names below obsolete. Exactly as happened after the last major reorganisation, in 1974, however, some English county and area bird societies have changed their recording areas and others have not. So, without defining the precise boundaries of the 'counties' given below, these are, so far as possible, the names used by the local recorders who sent the Panel their information.

For Wales and for Scotland, it has been decided, again so far as possible, to use the names of the recording areas included in the respective annual bird reports of those two countries. Each publishes a map showing the names and boundaries, that for Wales being based on the Watsonian vice-counties, and that for Scotland on the local bird-report areas.

England, SW Avon, Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Hampshire, Isles of Scilly, Isle of Wight, Somerset, Wiltshire

England, SE Bedfordshire, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, London & Middlesex, Oxfordshire, Surrey, Sussex (East and West)

England, E Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Suffolk

England, Central Derbyshire, Herefordshire, Leicestershire (with Rutland), Nottinghamshire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Midlands, Worcestershire

England, N Cheshire, Cleveland, Cumbria, Durham, Greater Manchester, Isle of Man, Lancashire, Merseyside, Northumberland, North Humberside, Tyne & Wear, Yorkshire (North, South and West)

Wales The Watsonian vice-counties of Anglesey (Môn), Brecon (Brycheiniog), Carmarthen (Caerfyrddin), Caernarfon, Ceredigion, Denbigh (Dinbych), Flint (Fflint), Glamorgan and Gower (Morgannwg), Gwent, Meirionnydd, Montgomery (Trefaldwyn), Pembroke (Penfro), Radnor (Maesyfed)

Scotland, S The local bird-recording areas of Dumfries & Galloway, Borders, Lothian, Ayrshire, Clyde (comprising West and East Dunbartonshire including that part now in Argyll & Bute, North and South Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, City of Glasgow, Inverclyde, Stirling–Clyde drainage), Clyde Islands (Arran, the Cumbraes, Bute)

Scotland, Mid The local bird-recording areas of Angus & Dundee, Fife, Forth (Clackmannanshire, Falkirk, Stirling), Perth & Kinross, Northeast Scotland (Aberdeenshire), Moray & Nairn

Scotland, N & W The local bird-recording areas of Argyll & Bute (except Bute and former West Dunbartonshire), Caithness, Highland (Badenoch & Strathspey, Inverness, Ross & Cromarty, Sutherland), Orkney, Shetland and the Outer Hebrides

Northern Ireland Co. Antrim, Co. Armagh, Co. Down, Co. Fermanagh, Co. Londonderry, Co. Tyrone

Systematic list

The definitions of 'Confirmed breeding', 'Probable breeding' and 'Possible breeding' used in the Panel's reports follow those recommended by the European Ornithological Atlas Committee (now part of the European Bird Census Council). Within tables, the abbreviations 'Confirmed (pairs)' and 'Possible/probable (pairs)' mean, respectively, 'Number of pairs confirmed breeding' and 'Number of pairs possibly or probably breeding'.

Within each species account, numbers given in the format '1-4 pairs' indicate (in this case) one proven breeding pair and a possible maximum total of four breeding pairs.

Red-throated Diver *Gavia stellata*

Long-term monitoring continued in Orkney and Shetland. Other, more casual, breeding observations are not listed.

Scotland, N & W

ORKNEY On Hoy, of 63 pairs, 42 were successful and 21 failed; on West Mainland, of 25 pairs, 13 were successful, and reared 18 young.

SHETLAND On Fetlar, 23 pairs reared 21 young; at Hermaness, Unst, seven pairs reared six young; on Foula, 13 pairs reared three young. The overall breeding success of 0.70/pair is substantially better than the 0.39 of 1998, despite the continued very poor production on Foula.

WESTERN ISLES The first successful breeding took place, on Barra.

The total British breeding population was estimated at 935-1,500 pairs in 1994 (Stone *et al.* 1997).

Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*

The RSPB monitored 90 sites, of which 74 were occupied. Rafts have been constructed on several lochs to provide nesting sites that are less prone to flooding than those on banks and islands.

Year	Sites monitored	Sites occupied	Rafts used/ available	Young fledged (av. chicks per pair) Rafts	Natural	Total
1996	120	96	27/45	19 (0.70)	28 (0.41)	47 (0.49)
1997	98	82	32/41	17 (0.53)	12 (0.10)	29 (0.35)
1998	114	82	38/45	19 (0.50)	12 (0.28)	31 (0.38)
1999	90	74	38/48	14 (0.36)	7 (0.27)	21 (0.33)

The number of rafts used remains high, but, owing to cold, wet and windy weather during the main hatching period, productivity was the lowest recorded since monitoring began in 1991. Breeding success at natural sites was similar to that in 1998 and, as usual, below that for those pairs using the rafts.

Red-necked Grebe *Podiceps grisegena*

Six localities in three areas: one pair and 3-5 adults in summer plumage.

England, E

Three localities: (1) summer-plumaged adult from 19th March to 3rd April, and from 3rd May to 5th September, at usual site; (2) summer-plumaged adult on 8th June; (3) summer-plumaged adult (perhaps same bird as (2)) from 30th June to 14th July.

England, N

Two localities: (1) summer-plumaged adult seen sporadically from 1st April to 19th August; (2) summer-plumaged adult on 8th June, perhaps the same bird as (1).

Scotland, S

One locality: summer-plumaged adult on 7th April, pair recorded from 12th April intermittently to 29th July.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	6	5	3	9	7	10	6	8	4	10	6
No. pairs	3	2	1	3	0	1	4	2	1	4-5	1
No. individuals	9	3	4	12	7	13	10	10	3	5	3-5

A disappointing year, after the improved showing in 1998. The long-established pair in south Scotland, which has been present since 1983, sometimes attempting to breed, was only intermittent in its appearance, perhaps suggesting that this site is being deserted.

Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus*

24 localities: 35 pairs breeding, fledging 12 young.

Scotland, Mid and N & W

24 localities: total of 35 pairs bred, fledging 12 young; also six unpaired singles.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	39	36	31	34	33	32	31	24	22	25	24
Confirmed (pairs)	70	74	61	72	73	51	58	49	53	42	35
Possible/ probable (pairs)	8	12	13	5	4	8	7	6	3	8	6
Max. total pairs	78	86	74	77	77	59	65	55	56	50	41

The breeding productivity, of 0.34 young per pair, is well below the long-term average of 0.60, as it was in 1998. The RSPB has started a number of experimental projects to improve the nesting habitat, particularly by increasing the amount of available nesting cover from aquatic vegetation. Investigations are also being carried out into the effects of predation of adult birds. The Panel is grateful to the North of Scotland Regional Office of the RSPB for information on numbers and breeding performance.

Black-necked Grebe *Podiceps nigricollis*

22 localities in 17 counties: 34-53 pairs bred.

England, SW

Two localities: 0-2 pairs. AVON One locality: pair present, intermittently, May-June; juvenile seen in August, but no evidence that it was reared here. HAMPSHIRE One locality: pair 9th-22nd May.

England, SE

Two localities: 1-3 pairs. ESSEX One locality: pair bred, not successfully. HERTFORDSHIRE One locality: two pairs in June, one bird seen carrying nesting material.

England, E

Four localities: 1-4 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: pair in late April, some nest-building activity. LINCOLNSHIRE One locality: pair bred. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Two localities: (1) pair in April; (2) pair in late March.

England, Central

Two localities: 2-3 pairs. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Two localities: (1) two pairs fledged five young; (2) pair probably bred, no young seen.

England, N

Six localities: 24-32 pairs. CHESHIRE One locality: six pairs bred successfully, three pairs probably bred, another (tenth) pair present. GREATER MANCHESTER One locality: pair fledged four young. NORTHUMBERLAND Three localities: (1) 17 pairs with 31 young; (2) two pairs in May; (3) pair in May. YORKSHIRE One locality: two juveniles in early July, suggestive of local origin.

Scotland, S

Two localities: 1-2 pairs. BORDERS One locality: pair bred. LOTHIAN One locality: summer-plumaged adult in early April.

Scotland, Mid

Four localities: 5-7 pairs. FIFE One locality: pair present, but not known to have bred. ANGUS One locality: pair bred. PERTHSHIRE Two localities: (1) four pairs attempted to breed, at least six young hatched, and three or four fledged; (2) pair in late May.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	19	19	25	29	31	32	30	32	26	18	22
Confirmed (pairs)	25	21	19	26	24	27	30	20	17	35	34
Possible/ probable (pairs)	15	16	34	34	26	54	47	33	29	13	19
Max. total pairs	40	37	53	60	50	81	77	53	46	48	53

The number of localities rose slightly from the low point of 1998, but the number of confirmed breeding pairs was one fewer than that year's record number. Single sites in Cheshire and in Northumberland again contributed the bulk of the breeding pairs.

Great Bittern *Botaurus stellaris*

17 localities, of which 16 had a minimum of 19 and a maximum of 24 booming males; between 21 and 25 young fledged from at least 21 nesting attempts.

England, SW

Two localities: (1) booming male, late February to early April; (2) wandering male, some booming heard, late May.

England, SE

Three localities: (1)-(3) booming males, only one regular.

England, E

11 localities: (1) five booming males, nine nests found, at least 13 young fledged; (2) two booming males, six nests found; (3) one booming male, two nests found, at least one young fledged; (4) two booming males, one nest found; (5) one booming male, one nest found; (6)-(8) single booming males, breeding not confirmed; (9)(10) single males, intermittently booming; (11) one in flight, mid-June.

England, N

One locality: three booming males, at least two nesting attempts, two juveniles seen.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. booming localities	14	12	13	14	13	16	13	10	10	12	16
Confirmed nests	3	3	4	4	5	5	11	8	15	13	21
Booming males (min.)	nc	18	16	18	15	15	19	22	11	13	19
Booming males (max.)	30	20	17	19	17	16	20	22	12	18	24

An encouraging increase, in all categories, compared with 1998. As in recent years, strict criteria are applied to records of booming males, with records included in the minimum figure of 19 only when (1) sound analysis of the boom showed that the bird was different from those nearby, (2) the booming period overlapped those at nearby sites, or (3) booming was heard at the same time as those in nearby territories. In addition, the birds must be heard for at least a week, and reported by a reliable observer (e.g. site warden, County Recorder). The additional five booming males heard this year were confirmed, but the records did not meet the above criteria. Totals in the table since 1990 have been adjusted to take these criteria into account. The total of 21-25 young fledged is based on the number tagged by RSPB staff and their estimate of chicks which fledged from nests not visited.

Research effort sponsored by the RSPB and EN continues, while the results of management work carried out by a variety of organisations are starting to become apparent. The Panel is grateful to both organisations for supplying many of these data.

Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*

Nine localities: 30-36 pairs bred.

England, SW

Nine localities: 30-36 pairs. AVON Two localities: (1)(2) no breeding, but birds present in suitable areas in April and May. DEVON Two localities: (1)(2) single pairs indulging in aggressive courtship in late March and early April. DORSET

Two localities: (1) 23 pairs bred, number of fledged young unknown; (2) two pairs bred. HAMPSHIRE Two localities: (1) five pairs bred, at least two pairs reared young; (2) at least one pair, may have bred. SOMERSET One locality: three birds flying in and out of heronry, but breeding not proved.

Numbers at the original site in Dorset continue to increase, as does the spread in either direction along the south coast, as well as north into adjacent counties.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Five localities: 1-7 pairs bred.

England, E
Two localities: (1) up to nine birds (perhaps four pairs), June and July, with mutual preening and stick-gathering observed; (2) pair present, but did not breed.
England, N
Two localities: (1) pair bred, laying three eggs and rearing two young; (2) two birds, occasionally three, throughout the summer, observed carrying sticks.
Scotland, Mid
One locality: single bird in May.

The breeding record in 1998, proclaimed as the first in Britain since 1688, may not, it seems, have produced fledged young, as reported originally (*Brit. Birds* 93: 364). Full details will appear in a future issue of the Suffolk Bird Report. The pair in northern England this year did, however, rear two young to fledging. Other pairs or groups of birds are continuing to show signs of breeding activity in different localities.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus*

15 localities: 4-7 pairs bred; also ten singles.

Scotland, N & W
14 localities: (1) two pairs, one pair bred and reared one young; (2) pair bred and reared one young; (3) pair may have bred, but no young seen; (4) pair attempted nest-building; (5)-(14) single birds.
Northern Ireland
One locality: two pairs bred and reared three young.

The above are all considered to be of wild origin, though some may have been injured birds, not able to undertake their normal migration to Iceland. Records of escaped birds are now included in the Panel's report on non-native breeding birds.

Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*

Breeding reports were received as follows:

England, SW
SOMERSET Four pairs at three localities.
England, SE
ESSEX Single summering pairs or birds at eight localities.
England, E
NORFOLK Summering pairs or birds at 13 localities.
England, Central
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Three males and a female at one locality. WARWICKSHIRE Summering pairs or birds at three localities.
England, N
DURHAM 14 broods, and 15 other pairs, at 14 localities. NORTHUMBERLAND Seven broods, comprising a total of 30 young, at three localities.
Scotland, S
BORDERS Two pairs bred, and third pair present, at three localities. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY Three pairs bred at one locality.
Scotland, Mid
ABERDEENSHIRE Two pairs at one locality. MORAY & NAIRN Two broods at one locality.
Scotland, N & W
ARGYLL Three broods at one locality. ORKNEY 13 pairs bred, plus another pair present, at ten localities. SHETLAND Two broods at one locality. WESTERN ISLES Five pairs bred and seven pairs probably bred on two islands.

The number of reports from England has fallen compared with 1998, although the total remains around 100 pairs, typical of recent years. The most recent estimate of the British population is 300-500 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Gadwall *Anas strepera*

Breeding reports were received as follows:

England, SW
DEVON Four pairs. DORSET Up to 11 pairs. GLOUCESTERSHIRE 30 pairs. HAMPSHIRE At least 44 pairs. SOMERSET At least 59 pairs.
England, SE
BERKSHIRE Seven pairs. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE 11 pairs. ESSEX 50 pairs.
HERTFORDSHIRE 24 pairs. SURREY 17 pairs. SUSSEX Ten pairs.
England, E
HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH 30 pairs. LINCOLNSHIRE Seven pairs. NORFOLK 120 pairs. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE 13 pairs. SUFFOLK At least 51 pairs.
England, Central
DERBYSHIRE 27 pairs. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 43 pairs. SHROPSHIRE Three pairs. WARWICKSHIRE 20 pairs. WORCESTERSHIRE One pair.
England, N
CLEVELAND 11 pairs. CHESHIRE 25 pairs. GREATER MANCHESTER Nine pairs. LANCASHIRE 25 pairs. NORTHUMBERLAND Ten pairs.
Wales
ANGLESEY Two pairs. CARMARTHEN Five pairs. GWENT One pair. PEMBROKESHIRE One pair (first breeding in county).
Scotland, S
BORDERS One pair. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY Single male.
Scotland, N & W
ARGYLL One pair. ORKNEY 13 pairs. ROSS & CROMARTY Single male.

The total of pairs reported, 688, is below the 1998 total of almost 800 pairs, but is still higher than the 500-550 pairs in 1996 and 1997. The drop is widespread, although a number of counties did not send in reports. The most recent estimate of the British population is about 770 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*

25 localities: 22-37 pairs breeding.

England, SE
Three localities: 1-3 pairs. ESSEX One locality: pair summered. OXFORDSHIRE One locality: pair probably bred. SUSSEX One locality: pair bred.
England, E
Two localities: nine pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: eight pairs bred. SUFFOLK One locality: pair bred, the first proven breeding record in the county since 1951.
England, Central
One locality: 0-1 pair. WARWICKSHIRE One locality: pair in April-May, female absent for two weeks in May, then returned, so possibly nested and failed.
England, N
One locality: one pair. LANCASHIRE One locality: pair bred.
Wales
One locality: 0-1 pair. PEMBROKESHIRE One locality: summering female in June.
Scotland, S
One locality: 0-1 pair. LOTHIAN One locality: pair present throughout May.
Scotland, Mid
One locality: pair bred. ABERDEENSHIRE One locality: pair bred.
Scotland, N & W
15 localities: 10-20 pairs. ARGYLL One locality: two pairs, one probably bred. HIGHLAND Four localities: (1) pair bred; (2)-(4) pairs or females in suitable habitat. ORKNEY Nine localities: (1) three pairs bred; (2)(3) two pairs bred; (4) pair bred; (5)-(9) single pairs present. WESTERN ISLES One locality: pair bred.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	16	20	28	23	23	49	25	33	22	28	25
Confirmed (pairs)	11	9	4	13	4	20	11	8	5	13	22
Possible/ probable (pairs)	28	27	39	35	43	56	34	45	28	37	15
Max. total pairs	38	36	43	48	47	76	45	53	33	50	37

A mixed year, with the highest number of confirmed breeding pairs since the Panel began

keeping records, in 1973, but backed up by the lowest number of possible and probable breeding pairs since 1987. The numbers on Orkney, which holds such a high proportion of the British population, amounted, in a partial survey, to eight confirmed pairs and five others, compared with 12 and eight respectively in 1998.

Garganey *Anas querquedula*

77 localities: 37-108 pairs breeding.

England, SW
17 localities: 6-21 pairs. AVON Two localities: three males. DEVON Nine localities: pair bred, plus one other pair and six males (including one at two sites). DORSET One locality: pair bred. SOMERSET Five localities: four pairs bred, plus five other pairs.

England, SE
Six localities: 1-9 pairs. ESSEX Four localities: pair bred, plus four other pairs. HERTFORDSHIRE One locality: one male. KENT One locality: three pairs.

England, E
15 localities: 23-37 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: 18 pairs bred. NORFOLK Six localities: four pairs bred, plus seven other pairs. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Three localities: pair bred, plus two other males. SUFFOLK Four localities: five pairs.

England, Central
Five localities: 1-5 pairs. DERBYSHIRE Two localities: pair bred, plus one other pair. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Two localities: two pairs. SHROPSHIRE One locality: one male.

England, N
11 localities: 3-13 pairs. CLEVELAND One locality: three pairs. GREATER MANCHESTER Six localities: two pairs and three other males, plus up to four eclipse birds from July. LANCASHIRE Three localities: pair bred, plus another pair and a male. YORKSHIRE One locality: two pairs bred.

Wales
15 localities: 1-15 pairs. CEREDIGION One locality: pair bred. OTHER WELSH COUNTIES 14 localities: 14 singles.

Scotland, S
One locality: 0-1 pair. BORDERS One locality: one male.

Scotland, N & W
Six localities: 1-6 pairs. ARGYLL One locality: one pair. ORKNEY Five localities: pair bred, plus three other pairs and one male.

Northern Ireland
One locality: one pair. ARMAGH One locality: pair bred.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	81	87	90	90	73	65	80	60	85	86	77
Confirmed (pairs)	18	14	12	16	14	13	9	15	10	22	37
Possible/ probable (pairs)	80	97	82	144	149	98	108	63	119	122	71
Max. total pairs	98	111	94	160	163	111	117	78	129	144	108

The worst year since 1996, with numbers down more or less everywhere except, curiously, north and west Scotland, where numbers were higher than in 1998.

Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*

394 pairs.

England, SW
30 pairs. AVON Five pairs. DORSET Seven pairs. GLOUCESTERSHIRE One pair. HAMPSHIRE Four pairs. ISLE OF WIGHT One pair. SOMERSET 12 pairs.

England, SE
100 pairs. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Three pairs. ESSEX 60 pairs. HERTFORDSHIRE Six pairs. KENT 20 pairs. SURREY 11 pairs.

England, E
120 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE 16 pairs. LINCOLNSHIRE 26 pairs. NORFOLK 52 pairs. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Four pairs. SUFFOLK 22 pairs.

England, Central
15 pairs. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE Four pairs. SHROPSHIRE Three pairs. WARWICKSHIRE Seven pairs. WORCESTERSHIRE One pair.

England, N
81 pairs. CLEVELAND 20 pairs. CHESHIRE 22 pairs. GREATER MANCHESTER Four pairs. LANCASHIRE 15 pairs. NORTHUMBERLAND Seven pairs. YORKSHIRE 13 pairs.

Wales
19 pairs. ANGLESEY Three pairs. CARMARTHEN 14 pairs. GLAMORGAN Two pairs.

Scotland, S
Seven pairs. BORDERS Seven pairs.

Scotland, Mid
Four pairs. CENTRAL One pair. FIFE Three pairs.
Scotland, N & W
Three pairs. ORKNEY Two pairs. ROSS & CROMARTY One pair.
Northern Ireland
15 pairs. ARMAGH 15 pairs.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	116	133	161	145	117	158	142	98+	96+	96+	nc
Confirmed (pairs)	260	207	284	266	237	347	309	269	246	386	394
Possible/ probable (pairs)	76	86	144	292	179	291	185	100	134	58	-
Max. total pairs	336	293	428	558	416	638	494	369	380	444	394

Numbers reported were lower than in 1998, with some counties not sending in records. The number of localities has been omitted, since this is also not always available.

Greater Scaup *Aythya marila*

One locality: one pair.

Northern Ireland
ARMAGH One locality: one pair bred, brood of seven hatched, which was reduced to three before fledging. This is the second breeding record for Northern Ireland.

There were no breeding records of this species in 1998, and confirmed breeding is a comparatively rare event.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*

49 localities: 14-58 pairs.

Scotland, Mid
Two localities: five pairs all believed to have bred.
Scotland, N & W
ARGYLL Three localities: 17 pairs recorded. HIGHLAND Total of 44 localities checked in partial survey: minimum 36 pairs found, of which nine were confirmed breeding.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	7	9	14	32	38	47	61	10	8	16	49
Confirmed (pairs)	8	6	9	9	16	5	nc	11	2	6	14
Possible/ probable (pairs)	32	23	21	62	72	79	76-89	32	33	35	44
Max. total pairs	40	29	30	71	88	84	89	43	35	41	58

About half of the known breeding sites in the Flow Country were surveyed this year. The last full census was in 1995, when the British and Irish population was estimated to be 195 pairs (Underhill *et al.* 1998).

Velvet Scoter *Melanitta fusca*

One locality: one male.

Scotland, N & W
HIGHLAND One locality: adult male present, with breeding Common Scoters *M. nigra*.

The presence of an adult male on an inland water in midsummer is thought sufficiently unusual to be worth recording. This species has not previously appeared in these reports.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*

Only sample data are available from nestbox schemes in Highland Region, Scotland. The first

breeding records in Borders Region were reported in 1999.

England, E
Seven localities: 0-8 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE Five localities: (1)-(5) single summering birds. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Two localities: (1) two males summered; (2) single male summered.

England, Central
One locality: 0-1 pair. DERBYSHIRE One locality: single female summered.

England, N
One locality: 0-1 pair. LANCASHIRE One locality: pair summered.

Scotland, S
Five localities: 1-5 pairs. BORDERS Five localities: (1) pair bred, five young reared, the first breeding record for Borders; (2)-(5) single summering birds.

Scotland, Mid
Two localities: 1-2 pairs. CENTRAL One locality: pair bred in nestbox. MORAY & NAIRN One locality: adult female present.

Scotland, N & W
61 pairs. HIGHLAND Two localities: (1) Abernethy RSPB Reserve: 11 pairs in 28 boxes checked, 38 young hatched; (2) Insh Marshes RSPB Reserve: 47 nesting attempts in 56 boxes, 25 clutches incubated, 125 young hatched. Casual records of three other pairs in the region.

The first breeding in Borders may indicate the beginning of a slow spread southwards. Small numbers continue to summer in England.

European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

37 localities: 13 pairs breeding; minimum of 14 young reared.

Great Britain
37 localities: (1) pair fledged two young, third adult present also; (2)-(5) pair fledged two young; (6) pair fledged one young, two further adults present; (7) pair fledged one young, third adult present also; (8)(9) pair fledged one young; (10)-(13) pairs present and breeding, but apparently no young fledged; (14)(15) pairs present and nest-building, but no eggs laid; (16) four adults present, no proof of breeding; (17) pair and third adult present, no proof of breeding; (18)-(27) pairs present, no proof of breeding; (28)-(37) single birds present.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Confirmed (pairs)	2	3	2	8	6	9	9	14	14	17	13
Max. total pairs	20	19	22	26	27	28	30	34	39	37	43



David Tipling/Windrush

205. Common Goldeneyes *Bucephala clangula*, Speyside, March 2000

Although the number of confirmed breeding pairs fell, the overall total of pairs rose to a new high. It was suggested by Roberts *et al.* (1999) that the true population of this species in Britain is probably more than 50 pairs. Accordingly, the Panel organised a census in 2000 and provisional results suggest a total of 29 confirmed pairs and a possible total of 61 pairs (Batten 2001). A more detailed account will be presented in our report for 2000. The Panel continues to urge observers to submit all records of this species.

Red Kite *Milvus milvus*

181 breeding pairs in Wales reared 165 young, and at least 119 breeding pairs from released stock in England and Scotland reared at least 231 young.

Wales

181 pairs were proved to breed, of which 118 were successful, rearing 165 young. While the numbers of breeding pairs and of successful pairs were both higher than ever before, the number of fledged young fell slightly. Bad weather was responsible for several nest failures, including heavy snowfall in mid-April which caused the collapse of eight nests. At least one nest was robbed by egg-collectors.

In addition to the breeding pairs, there were 47 non-breeding pairs, while 155 unmated singles were counted during the spring. The total population stood at 610 individuals in April and 766 in August, which is substantially more than the 1998 figures of 520 and 682, respectively.

Wales	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Total pairs	71	84	92	101	115	138	146	161	180	200	228
Breeding pairs	54	65	76	84	104	111	127	130	152	167	181
Successful pairs	33	47	41	60	61	70	79	90	99	112	118
Young reared	49	73	62	96	82	99	117	119	129	174	165
Young/territorial pair	0.69	0.87	0.67	0.95	0.71	0.72	0.80	0.74	0.72	0.87	0.72

The Panel wishes to thank Peter Davis and the Welsh Kite Trust for the above information.

England

A total of 75 breeding pairs of the re-established population in southern England was located at or near the original release site in the Chilterns; of these, 71 pairs successfully fledged 155 young. In the East Midlands release area, six of the seven breeding pairs were successful, rearing 16 young; releases have now ceased at this site. A new release site was established this year in northern England, where 23 young birds were released.

In addition to the above, breeding took place in one southern England county, with at least one young fledged, and pairs were seen in three other counties.

England	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Total territorial pairs	2	7	12	22	26	nc	61	87	nc
Breeding pairs	2	4	9	20	24	37+	57	76	83
Successful pairs	0	4	8	17	22	nc	50	67	78
Young reared	0	9	14	37	55	80	111	146	172
Young/territorial pair	-	1.29	1.17	1.68	2.12	-	1.82	1.68	-

Scotland

A total of 32 pairs was located in the area of the North of Scotland release site; of these, 30 laid and 22 were successful, fledging 54 young. At the Central Scotland release site, four of six breeding pairs were successful, rearing five young between them. A seventh pair was seen.

Scotland	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Total territorial pairs	2	8	11	17	22	27	30	39
Breeding pairs	1	5	8	15	17	23	25	36
Successful pairs	1	3	6	11	16	19	22	26
Young reared	1	7	13	26	39	39	47	59
Young/territorial pair	0.50	0.86	1.18	1.53	1.77	1.44	1.57	1.51

The Panel is grateful to Ian Carter of English Nature and Colin Crooke of the RSPB for the above information.

Steady growth continues at all the re-establishment sites, though more quickly in England than in Scotland, where persecution, particularly through poisoning, remains a serious problem. Breeding in an area away from the English release sites was confirmed for the first time, although it has been suspected before.

White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*

Re-establishment.

Scotland

A total of 18 pairs, or trios, of territory-holding birds laid an estimated 15-16 clutches. Nine of these were known to have hatched, resulting in six fledged broods totalling 11 young. All the nest failures were attributed to natural causes. The release of young birds from Norway has now ceased.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Breeding pairs/trios (min.)	6	9	8	9	6	8	9	12	11	18	18
Successful pairs	3	2	4	4	4	4	5	7	5	9	6
Young reared	5	2	7	7	5	5	7	9	9	13	11
Young/territorial pair	0.83	0.22	0.88	0.78	0.83	0.63	0.78	0.75	0.82	0.72	0.61

A slightly less successful year than 1998, with productivity slightly below the average for the previous ten years, although the general situation remains favourable. The Sea Eagle Project Team remain concerned that, although 12 of the 20 eagle territories which have been established since the early 1980s have successfully produced a total of 88 fledged young, just four of these sites are responsible for no fewer than 64 (73%) young. All four key sites have been occupied by the same individual birds throughout their history.

The Panel is grateful to Colin Crooke and the Sea Eagle Project Team for providing it with information. The Project is supported jointly by the JNCC, SNH and the RSPB.



Frédéric Desmette/Windrush

206. White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Skye, Inner Hebrides, June 2000.

Marsh Harrier *Circus aeruginosus*

145-164 pairs bred, rearing at least 256 young.

England, SW

One locality: one pair. SOMERSET One locality: pair fledged four or five young.

England, SE

Eight localities or areas: 33-38 pairs. ESSEX Four localities: (1) pair fledged three young, plus another pair present; (2) pair fledged three young; (3) two pairs present; (4) immature male and two females nest-building. KENT Four localities: (1) 28 females nested, of which 19 successful, fledging 45 young; (2) pair fledged four young; (3) pair fledged three young; (4) pair bred.

England, E

28 localities or areas: 106-113 pairs bred. CAMBRIDGESHIRE Three localities: (1) two pairs fledged seven young; (2) two pairs fledged six young; (3) pair probably bred. LINCOLNSHIRE Four localities: (1) two pairs fledged seven young; (2) two pairs fledged six young; (3) two pairs probably bred; (4) pair probably bred. NORFOLK Ten localities or areas: 64 pairs fledged at least 102 young; two additional pairs probably bred. SUFFOLK 11 localities: (1) 11 pairs bred, eight of these fledging 25 young; (2) eight pairs fledged 14 young; (3) six pairs bred; (4) three pairs fledged nine young; (5)(6) pair fledged two young; (7) pair fledged one young; (8)-(10) single pairs bred; (11) pair possibly bred.

England, N

Four localities: 5-6 pairs bred. LANCASHIRE Two localities: (1) two pairs fledged six young; (2) immature pair summered. YORKSHIRE One locality: three pairs fledged seven young.

Wales

One locality: 0-1 pair. ANGLESEY One locality: male displaying during April-May.

Scotland, Mid

One locality: 0-1 pair. FIFE One locality: pair possibly bred.

Scotland, N & W

Four localities: 0-4 pairs. HIGHLAND Three localities: (1)-(3) single female seen. ORKNEY One locality: pair present, male seen nest-building.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Breeding males	58	73	83	92	84	114	151	135	131	137	145
Breeding females	66	110	91	107	110	129	156	136	132	138	145
Young	172	145	198	229	244	255	277	263	206	292	256

An increase of 6% in the number of breeding birds compared with 1998, partly reflecting better survey coverage, although in some areas there are difficulties in monitoring all possible pairs. The reduction in the number of young reared was probably caused by spells of poor weather at critical times.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

The following summary information has been received. For each area, it is based on a non-randomised sample rather than a complete survey.

Area	Occupied territories	Territories known to have fledged young	Min. no. young fledged	Min. young/ territorial pair
England, N (all counties)	25	12	28	1.12
Wales	10	6	12	1.20
Borders & Lothian	10	3	7	0.70
Dumfries & Galloway	20	10	30+	1.50
South Strathclyde	no data	–	–	–
Stirling	5	2	7	1.40
Angus	3	2	6	2.00
Perthshire	23	13	37	1.61
Northeast Scotland	14	7	19	1.36
Moray & Nairn	21	15	48	2.29
Argyll & Bute	24	16	39+	1.63
Highland	11	7	20	1.82
Orkney	25	10	21	0.84
Western Isles	12	7	19	1.58
TOTALS	203	110	293	1.44

The numbers of monitored territories and pairs were lower than in 1998, when a national census took place, but overall breeding success has increased from the 1.2 young per territorial pair recorded then. The results of the national census will be published shortly (Sim *et al.*, in press). The total of territorial pairs found by the 1998 census was 570 (range 499-640), which is little different from the previous census in 1988.

The Panel is grateful to the Scottish, Welsh and Cumbrian Raptor Study Groups, as well as to many individuals, for the above information.

Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*

11 localities: 4-11 pairs reared 12 young.

England, SW
Five localities: (1) pair probably bred, but not successfully; (2) pair present, but non-breeding; (3) single male seen; (4)(5) single females seen.
England, SE
Three localities: (1) pair bred, fledging three young; (2) male present for a month; (3) single female seen.
England, E
Three localities: three pairs bred; two of these fledged nine young, the third failed.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	15	9	14	12	8	15	14	16	13	11	11
Breeding males	4	8	5	7	5	7	8	6	7	3	4
Other males	5	4	3	2	2	9	8	8	6	10	4
Breeding females	6	11	7	8	6	12	9	7	9	3	4
Other females	7	2	6	4	1	11	4	7	3	5	5
Young	14	20	14	12	9	13	26	14	11	8	12

Another poor year, only slightly better than the low point of 1998. The decline from the peak numbers of 1995 continues to be of great concern.

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*

At least 270 localities or areas: 198-293 pairs breeding.

England
At least 99 localities in 25 counties: 79 pairs known to have bred, plus 49 other pairs.
Wales
81 localities in nine counties: 50 pairs known to have bred, plus 32 other pairs.
Scotland
89 localities in seven recording areas: 68 pairs known to have bred, plus 14 other pairs.
Northern Ireland
One locality: one pair known to have bred.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. counties	23	30	36	34	35	33	38	33	41	38	42
Confirmed (pairs)	112	93	158	150	199	145	249	160	247	179	198
Possible/ probable (pairs)	54	79	71	93	100	80	70	53	100	70	95
Max. total pairs	166	172	229	243	299	225	319	213	347	249	293

The main reason for the increase in numbers compared with 1998 was the improved reporting from Wales. The totals for England and Scotland remained very similar to those in the previous year. Some observers are still withholding information because of the risk of persecution faced by this raptor. We do, however, urge that all information should be lodged with the Panel to assist the conservation of this species, not least by obtaining more complete data on the scale of persecution.

Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*

The following summary information has been received. For each area, with the exception of northern England, it is based on a non-randomised sample rather than a complete census.

Area	Occupied territories	Territories known to have fledged young	Min. no. young fledged	Min. young/ territorial pair
England, N	2	0	0	-
Dumfries & Galloway	2	0	0	-
Borders	2	1	1	0.50
Central Scotland	8	5	6	0.75
Tayside	22	8	11	0.50
Northeast Scotland	19	17	12-13	0.6-0.7
Argyll	57	16	17	0.30
Highland	79	32	37	0.47
Western Isles	35	8	8	0.23
TOTALS	226	87	92-93	0.41

The 1999 season was a very poor one, with overall productivity well down on the figure of 0.6 young per territorial pair recorded in 1998. One of the two pairs in northern England laid one egg, but it failed to hatch. Successful breeding took place in the Borders, but the two pairs in Dumfries & Galloway failed this year.

The Panel is grateful to the Scottish and Cumbrian Raptor Study Groups for much of the above information.

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

136 pairs and four singles: 125 pairs laid eggs, rearing 183 young.

England, SW

SOMERSET One locality: a single bird summered for the fifth successive year.

England, Central

RUTLAND Two males present in summer; 12 more young were translocated from Scotland to Rutland Water, all of which fledged and left the area.

Scotland, S

BORDERS Three localities: (1) pair bred, fledging two young; (2) pair present but did not breed; (3) single bird present for much of the season.

Scotland, Mid

TAYSIDE 45 territories were occupied and 39 clutches were laid; 25 of these were successful, fledging 51 young. ELSEWHERE 16 pairs, all of which laid clutches, ten of them fledging 22 young.

Scotland, N & W

ARGYLL Four pairs were all successful, fledging ten young. HIGHLAND 69 pairs were found, of which 65 bred and 47 fledged 98 young.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Pairs with nests	58	62	73	76	88	95	99	104	111	131	136
Pairs with eggs	51	56	64	63	78	83	92	93	102	117	125
Successful pairs	38	44	44	47	56	69	73	74	77	93	87
Young reared	81	90	82	103	111	146	146	155	159	194	183
Young/territorial pair	1.40	1.45	1.12	1.36	1.26	1.53	1.47	1.49	1.43	1.48	1.35

The year 1999 was not quite so good as 1998, with lower breeding success despite more pairs nesting. High winds and heavy rain caused several failures, and in one area the high water level in the local river prevented the adults from catching sufficient fish to feed their young. Successful breeding again took place in southern Scotland.

The Panel is grateful for the information supplied to it by Roy Dennis, Colin Crooke and the Osprey Study Group.

Merlin *Falco columbarius*

The following summary information has been received. For each area, it is based on a non-randomised sample rather than a complete census.

Area	Occupied territories	Territories known to have fledged young	Min. no. young fledged	Min. young/ territorial pair
England, SW	1	1	1	1.00
England, Central	21	17	56	2.67
England, N	206	125	445+	2.16
Wales	29	17	53	1.83
Borders & Lothian	25	12	33	1.32
Dumfries & Galloway	13	10	22+	1.69
South Strathclyde	no data	–	–	–
Angus	12	9	30+	2.50
Stirling	3	no data	–	–
Perthshire	23	12	25+	1.09
Northeast Scotland	45	38	97+	2.16
Argyll & Bute	5	4	12	2.40
Highland	33	19	62	1.88
Orkney	17	10	30	1.76
Shetland	13	11	27	2.08
Western Isles	16	4	13	0.81
Northern Ireland	17	6	?	?
TOTALS	479	295	906	1.89

The number of occupied territories was almost identical to that in 1998, while successful breeding pairs rose slightly and the number of young fledged rose by 9%, which is encouraging. The Panel is grateful to the Cumbrian and Scottish Raptor Study Groups and many individuals for the information included in the table.The most recent estimate of the British population is 1,300 (1,100-1,500) pairs in 1993-94 (Rebecca & Bainbridge 1998).

Hobby *Falco subbuteo*

Minimum of 246-553 pairs breeding.

England, SW

60-172 pairs. AVON 2-10 pairs. DEVON 13 pairs. DORSET 12 pairs. HAMPSHIRE 16-71 pairs. ISLE OF WIGHT One pair. SOMERSET 6-25 pairs. WILTSHIRE 10-40 pairs.

England, SE

92-167 pairs. BEDFORDSHIRE One pair. BERKSHIRE 6-15 pairs. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE 2-14 pairs. ESSEX 50+ pairs. HERTFORDSHIRE 4-9 pairs. INNER LONDON Six pairs. KENT 1-2 pairs. OXFORDSHIRE Seven pairs. SURREY 2-37 pairs. SUSSEX 13-26 pairs.

England, E

32-81 pairs. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH 3-11 pairs. NORFOLK 8-16 pairs. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE 12-24 pairs. SUFFOLK 9-30 pairs.

England, Central

39-93 pairs. DERBYSHIRE 23-27 pairs. HEREFORDSHIRE 0-1 pair. LEICESTERSHIRE Four pairs. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 8-13 pairs. SHROPSHIRE 3-21 pairs. WARWICKSHIRE 6-25 pairs. WORCESTERSHIRE 0-12 pairs.

England, N

3-11 pairs. CHESHIRE 0-6 pairs. LANCASHIRE 0-1 pair. NORTHUMBERLAND 2-3 pairs. YORKSHIRE One pair.

Wales

15-19 pairs. BRECON 0-3 pairs. DENBIGH One pair. GWENT Eight pairs. MONTGOMERY 0-1 pair. RADNOR Six pairs.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Confirmed (pairs)	140	154	159	255	152	170	161	190	167	161	246
Possible/ probable (pairs)	250	287	310	327	341	330	269	264	457	514	307
Max. total pairs	390	441	469	582	493	500	430	454	624	675	553

The number of confirmed pairs has risen to its highest since 1992, but the number of possible/probable pairs is well down, partly as a result of poor reporting from some southern and eastern English counties, but also reflecting the difficulty which County Recorders have in interpreting the many scattered sightings of single birds which they receive. Numbers reported in Wales were a better indication of the true situation than were those in 1998. Gibbons *et al.* suggested that the British population was in the region of 500-900 pairs. Interestingly, Chapman (1999) gave a considerably higher estimated figure of 948-1,775 pairs.

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

The following summary information has been received. For each area, it is based on a non-randomised sample rather than a complete census.

Area	Occupied territories	Territories known to have produced clutches	Min. no. young fledged	Min. young/ occupied territory
England, SW	146	99	160	1.10
England, SE	18	14	28	1.56
England, Central	38	29	42	1.11
England, N	189	152	190	1.01
Wales	193	125	172	0.89
Borders & Lothian	44	29+	83	1.89
Dumfries & Galloway	78	71	93	1.19
South Strathclyde	25	20	25	1.00
Angus	21	7+	15	0.71
Central	25	12+	30	1.20
Perthshire	40	20+	47	1.18
Northeast Scotland	66	34+	71	1.08
Argyll	23	11+	17	0.74
Highland	16	13	15	0.94
Orkney	14	1+	1	0.07
Western Isles	14	4+	12	0.86
Northern Ireland	49	49	93	1.90
TOTALS	999	690+	1,094	1.10

Once again, there has been an increase in all the totals compared with the previous year, in this case 1998, when 858 occupied territories fledged 1,023 young. Overall breeding success has declined slightly from the 1.2 young/territorial pair in 1998. Note that the number of pairs known to have produced clutches has been substituted for the previously given number of pairs which fledged young, since the latter data were not available this year for several areas.

The Panel is grateful to the Scottish Raptor Study Groups for most of the Scottish information. The most recent estimate of the UK Peregrine Falcon population is 1,263 pairs in 1991 (Crick & Ratcliffe 1995).

Common Quail *Coturnix coturnix*

5-317 pairs breeding.

England, SW

0-88 pairs. AVON Four singing males. DORSET One singing male. GLOUCESTERSHIRE One probable family party and 14 singing males. HAMPSHIRE 12 singing males. SOMERSET Ten singing males. WILTSHIRE Seven pairs and 39 singing males.

England, SE

0-19 pairs. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Ten singing males. ESSEX Four singing males. HERTFORDSHIRE Five singing males.

England, E

2-59 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE One pair and two singing males. LINCOLNSHIRE One singing male. NORFOLK Two broods seen and 47 singing males. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Six singing males.

England, Central

1-50 pairs. DERBYSHIRE 23 singing males. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 17 singing males. SHROPSHIRE 16 singing males. WARWICKSHIRE One brood seen and seven singing males. WORCESTER-

SHIRE Three singing males.

England, N

2-37 pairs. CHESHIRE Pair bred and 11 singing males. LANCASHIRE 12 singing males. NORTHUMBERLAND One pair bred, and 12 other singing males.

Wales

0-18 pairs. ANGLESEY Three singing males. CAERNARFON Two singing males. CEREDIGION One singing male. DENBIGH Two singing males. GLAMORGAN Six singing males. PEMBROKE Three singing males. RADNOR One singing male.

Scotland, S

0-8 pairs. BORDERS Seven singing males. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY One singing male.

Scotland, Mid

0-13 pairs. ABERDEENSHIRE Five singing males. FIFE Three singing males. MORAY & NAIRN Five singing males.

Scotland, N & W

0-8 pairs. ARGYLL Two singing males. HIGHLAND Five singing males. SHETLAND One pair seen.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Confirmed (pairs)	27	13	2	9	1	8	15	5	4	5	5
Possible/ probable (pairs)	1,628	364	105	481	202	604	500	330	863	523	312
Max. total pairs	1,655	377	107	490	203	612	515	335	867	528	317

The worst year since 1993, with reduced numbers in all areas, but especially in southeast and eastern England.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

40 localities: 46-77 singing males.

England, SW

Three localities: 1-2 singing males, plus adult. DORSET One locality: adult trapped on 31st July. GLOUCESTERSHIRE One locality: casual record of singing male. SOMERSET One locality: one singing male.

England, SE

Two localities: four singing males, plus two adults and juvenile. KENT One locality: casual records of two adults and one juvenile. SUSSEX One locality: four singing males.

England, E

Nine localities: 10-16 singing males. CAMBRIDGESHIRE Three localities: (1) 3-6 singing males; (2)(3) single singing males. NORFOLK One locality: singing male. SUFFOLK Five localities: (1) 2-3 singing males; (2)(3) single singing males; (4)(5) casual records of single singing males.

England, Central

One locality: casual record of adult and juvenile. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE One locality: sight records of adult and juvenile.

England, N

Four localities: 5-14 singing males, plus juvenile. CHESHIRE One locality: one singing male. LANCASHIRE One locality: casual record of singing male. TYNE & WEAR One locality: juvenile seen. YORKSHIRE One locality: 4-12 singing males.

Wales

Four localities: 1-2 singing males, plus an adult, and a juvenile. ANGLESEY One locality: casual record of singing male. CEREDIGION Two localities: (1) singing male; (2) adult seen. GLAMORGAN One locality: juvenile seen.

Scotland, S

Three localities: 2-3 singing males. DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY One locality: casual record of singing male. LOTHIAN Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males.

Scotland, Mid

Five localities: 11-13 singing males. ABERDEENSHIRE Three localities: (1) 2-3 singing males; (2)(3) two singing males. DUMBARTONSHIRE One locality: 5-6 singing males.

Scotland, N & W

Nine localities: 12-23 singing males. ARGYLL Two localities: (1) singing male; (2) casual record of singing male. HIGHLAND Three localities: (1) 8-14 singing males; (2)(3) single singing males. ORKNEY Two localities: (1) singing male; (2) casual record of singing male. SHETLAND One locality: casual record of singing male. WESTERN ISLES One locality: casual record of two singing males.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. counties	7	5	5	9	12	4	5	5	7	11	25
No. localities	14	10	7	12	19	5	8	8	13	16	40
No. pairs/singing males	21	17	14	14	31	11	10	13	14	31	46-77

The first census of this species ever in Britain took place in 1999. The results clearly show how under-recorded this noisy, but nonetheless elusive, bird has been in the past. The figures above are all taken from a paper which reports the results of the census (Gilbert, in press), and the Panel is very grateful to Gillian Gilbert, the census-organiser, for making them available. The criteria used in the census separated persistently singing males from those that sang only briefly, the latter being described above as 'casual'. There was no evidence that breeding had taken place in the localities where the juveniles were seen.

Corn Crake *Crex crex*

576 pairs or singing males.

England, SW

Two localities: 0-2 pairs. OXFORDSHIRE Two localities: (1)(2) singing males.

Wales

One locality: 0-1 pair. PEMBROKE One locality: adult seen 26th May, juvenile seen 14th-17th September.

Scotland, N & W: Mainland

Two localities: 0-2 pairs. ROSS & CROMARTY Two localities: (1) singing male; (2) one found dead on road.

Scotland, N & W: Hebrides, Orkney and Shetland

16 localities or areas: 0-573 pairs. Totals of singing males: HIGHLAND – INNER HEBRIDES 16 (Skye 16; none on any of the Small Isles), STRATHCLYDE – INNER HEBRIDES 235 (Coll 48, Tiree 144, Mull 2, Iona 13, Colonsay & Oronsay 21, Islay 7), ORKNEY 15, SHETLAND 2, WESTERN ISLES 305 (Lewis 50, Harris 4, Berneray 2, North Uist 66, Benbecula 36, South Uist 101, Barra & Vatersay 46).

The total of 573 found on all Scottish islands in 1999 was slightly higher than the 550 found in 1998, but the increases were unevenly distributed, and offset by some declines. For example, the numbers on South Uist increased from 65 to no fewer than 101, but on Lewis the total dropped from 77 to 50. Sadly, none appeared on Canna after the welcome return of two birds in 1998 following an absence of several years. There were fewer mainland records this year, both in Scotland and in England.

The Panel is grateful to the RSPB for all the island data above.



Tim Loseby

207. Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*, Grove Ferry, Kent, August 2000.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

One extensive locality.

England, E

NORFOLK One locality: four pairs nested, one pair fledging two young.

Young have now been reared for three years in succession, following eight years of failure.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

One locality: single male present.

England, E

One locality: male present all year.

The single bird present at Titchwell, Norfolk, for the last six years remained throughout 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 528).

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

At least 36 localities: at least 655 pairs reared a minimum of 444 young.

England, SW

One locality: 2 pairs. DORSET One locality: two pairs bred, but were not successful. First county breeding record.

England, SE

Nine localities: 107-108 pairs. ESSEX Six localities: (1) 34 pairs bred, but only four young reared; (2) 15 pairs bred, fledging 15-18 young; (3)(4) two pairs bred, four young reared at one locality; (5) one pair bred, one pair probably bred; (6) pair bred. KENT Three localities: (1) 48 pairs fledged 57 young; (2) three pairs bred, no young fledged; (3) pair bred, unsuccessfully.

England, E

25 localities: 520-595 pairs. LINCOLNSHIRE One locality: 20 pairs fledged 43 young. NORFOLK 15 localities: (1) 64 pairs fledged 15 young; (2) 40 pairs probably bred, success unknown; (3) 37 pairs fledged 39 young; (4) 27 pairs bred, success unknown; (5) 25 pairs bred, success unknown; (6) 23 pairs fledged 39 young; (7) 22 pairs fledged three young; (8) 22 pairs bred, success unknown; (9) ten pairs probably bred, success unknown; (10) four pairs bred, success unknown; (11)(12) three pairs bred, success unknown; (13) two pairs bred, both failed; (14) pair bred, outcome unknown; (15) one pair fledged three young. SUFFOLK Nine localities: (1) 148 pairs fledged 87 young; (2) 45 pairs fledged eight young; (3) 19 pairs fledged 30 young, further 25 pairs present; (4) 25 pairs fledged c. 50 young; (5) ten pairs bred, success unknown; (6) nine pairs bred, success unknown; (7) four pairs fledged 14 young; (8) three pairs fledged eight young; (9) three pairs bred, but failed.

England, N

One locality: 26 pairs. YORKSHIRE One locality: 26 pairs fledged 25 young.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	24	21	21	29	25	29	25	25	35	48	36
Confirmed (pairs)	521	355	448	492	436	623	613	592	654	834	655
Young reared (min.)	150	200	305	336	347	181	149	189	238	536	444

The decline in the number of localities and breeding pairs is at least partly due to incomplete information from southeast England, where some colonies were not monitored. Productivity is still depressed by heavy predation at some colonies, but there were fewer problems with high tides than has been the case in some past years.

Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicnemus*

Seven counties: 235-246 pairs fledged a minimum of 163 young.

England, SW

58-68 pairs. HAMPSHIRE 19 pairs, of which 17 bred and fledged seven young. WILTSHIRE 39 pairs, of which 41 bred and fledged 37 young.

England, SE

Eight pairs. BERKSHIRE Six pairs fledged ten young. CAMBRIDGESHIRE One pair fledged two young. OXFORDSHIRE One pair fledged two young.

England, E
169-170 pairs. NORFOLK Brecks: 80 pairs fledged 49 young. Elsewhere: seven pairs, six of which bred and fledged five young. SUFFOLK Brecks: 79 pairs fledged 48 young. Elsewhere: four pairs fledged three young.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Confirmed (pairs)	126	139	139	155	146	141	165	174	192	215	235
Possible/ probable (pairs)	17	10	16	4	16	32	9	14	11	11	11
Max. total pairs	143	149	155	159	162	173	174	188	203	226	246
Min. no. of young fledged	79	112	123	111	101	91	164	155	167	165	163

The breeding population continues to increase, although the number of young fledged fell slightly for the second year running. Fledging success in the Norfolk and Suffolk Brecks, in particular, was well down, falling from 111 in 1998 to 97 this year.

The Panel wishes to thank Dr Rhys Green, RSPB, for his assistance in compiling the data.

Little Ringed Plover *Charadrius dubius*

The following summary information has been received. For each area, it is based on a non-randomised sample rather than a complete census.

Area	Possible/ probable pairs	Confirmed breeding pairs	Total pairs
England, SW	15	37	52
England, SE	50	50	100
England, E	12	55	67
England, Central	77	94	171
England, N	29	144	173
Wales	21	51	72
Scotland, Mid	0	1	1
TOTALS	204	432	636

The number reported has increased each year since the species was added to the Panel's list. The most recent estimate of the British population was 825-1,070 pairs in 1991 (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Dotterel *Charadrius morinellus*

Outside main Scottish breeding areas: one pair bred.

Scotland, S
One locality: one pair. BORDERS One locality: adult seen with two young.

The Panel seeks records only away from the main breeding range, which lies north of a line from the Firth of Clyde to the Firth of Tay and holds 840-950 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993). We accept that at least some of the birds on hilltops in southern Scotland and northern England will be on passage. For the first time for many years, there were no reports of this species from Cumbria.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Two localities: up to four pairs.

Scotland, N & W
Two localities: (1) up to three males seen displaying and chasing females, three pairs thought to have bred, although no young seen; (2) displaying adult in late May and June.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Confirmed (pairs)	2	1	0	1	2	0	0	1	1	0	0
Possible/ probable (pairs)	1	1	3	1	1	2	2	1	2	3	4
Max. total pairs	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	4

Three pairs returned to the traditional site for the second year running, while there was the welcome discovery of a new locality for this species.

Purple Sandpiper *Calidris maritima*

One locality: one individual.

Scotland, N & W

One locality: single bird seen.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	1
Confirmed (pairs)	2	1	3	1	1	4	1	2	3	2	0
Possible/ probable (pairs)	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Max. total pairs	4	1	4	2	1	4	1	2	3	3	1

Only very limited monitoring is carried out for this elusive species, but, even so, this is a disappointing report.

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

Three localities: three leks reported, but no evidence of breeding.

England, E

Three localities: three leks. CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: five males and three females lekking, no proof of breeding. NORFOLK One locality: up to 44 birds lekking in spring, no proof of breeding. SUFFOLK One locality: a lek of up to 15 birds, no proof of breeding.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	15	8	9	21	10	13	7	8	6	5	3
No. of leks	6	1	4	7	7	3	3	3	5	2	3
Nests/broods	1	3	7	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	0

Another very poor year, involving the lowest number of localities for more than 20 years, and with no records of lekking at former sites in northern England.

Black-tailed Godwit *Limosa limosa*

18 localities: 45-53 pairs breeding.

England, SE

Two localities: 2-4 pairs bred. KENT One locality: two pairs bred. SUSSEX One locality: two pairs present, but did not breed.

England, E

Four localities: 32-35 pairs bred. CAMBRIDGESHIRE Two localities: (1) 18 pairs fledged 26 young; (2) 14 pairs fledged one young. NORFOLK One locality: two pairs displayed constantly in May, but then departed. SUFFOLK One locality: pair seen copulating, but apparently did not nest.

England, N

Three localities: four pairs bred. CUMBRIA One locality: 22 summering birds until mid-June. LANCASHIRE Two localities: (1) two pairs bred, no young reared; (2) two pairs bred, one clutch taken by egg-collectors, fate of other unknown.

Scotland, N & W
Nine localities: 7-10 pairs bred.
ORKNEY Four localities: (1) two pairs bred; (2)(3) single pairs bred; (4) pair present in June. SHETLAND Five localities: (1) pair fledged two young; (2) pair fledged one young; (3) pair failed during incubation; (4)(5) single pairs on territory, but failed to breed.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	14	16	18	24	16	22	15	12	11	13	18
Confirmed (pairs)	34	33	28	20	28	20	28	34	42	38	45
Possible/ probable (pairs)	22	33	25	38	5	16	7	7	5	12	8
Max. total pairs	56	66	53	58	33	36	35	41	47	50	53

A reasonably good year, with a welcome increase in the number of localities and the highest number of confirmed breeders since 1984. In addition, while the total number of young reared each year is rarely complete, this year's 30 is one of the highest recorded for several years and compares with only seven definitely fledged in 1998.

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

Away from the species' stronghold in Orkney and Shetland, one pair possibly bred.

Wales
GWYNEDD One locality: a pair apparently holding territory.

An intriguing record. The Scottish population is estimated at 530 pairs (Stone *et al.* 1997).

Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

The following limited information was received:

Scotland, N & W
HIGHLAND 11 pairs reported from nine localities. SHETLAND Two pairs reported. WESTERN ISLES 13 territories located in a fairly comprehensive survey.

The above bears no relationship to the actual population (estimated at 1,100-1,600 pairs). More records would be welcome, perhaps especially from birdwatchers visiting the Highlands who observe this species displaying or singing.

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Three localities: 1-3 pairs.

England, Central
One locality: 0-1 pair. DERBYSHIRE One locality: pair summered, and was observed displaying and singing. This astonishing record has been accepted by the county records committee.

Scotland, Mid
ABERDEENSHIRE One locality: an adult giving alarm calls in suitable habitat, no young seen.

Scotland, N & W
HIGHLAND One locality: pair found with four young.

Breeding was suspected in Highland Region in 1995 and 1996, and again in 1998. This year there is finally a confirmed breeding record plus another probable one (both in Scotland, as might be expected), as well as a summering, and displaying, pair in central England, which is an exceptional record.

The only previous confirmed breeding record was in Inverness-shire in 1959 (*Brit. Birds* 52: 430-432).

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Three localities: 2-6 pairs bred.

Scotland, N & W
Three localities: (1) two pairs bred; (2) at least six birds, probably three pairs, displaying in May, breeding thought almost certainly to have occurred; (3) pair present and probably breeding.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	6	2	2	4	4	8	6	3	5	5	3
Confirmed (pairs)	2	1	1	1	2	6	7	8	0	8	2
Possible/ probable (pairs)	4	1	1	5	6	5	4	0	9	2	4
Max. total pairs	6	2	2	6	8	11	11	8	9	10	6

A disappointing year compared with 1998, with no birds present at one formerly regular site.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Seven localities: at least 18 breeding males reared 24+ young.

Scotland, N & W

Seven localities. ARGYLL One locality: pair present, thought to have bred, but no young seen. SHETLAND Three localities: (1)(2) Fetlar, total of 12 breeding males, at least 17 young believed to have fledged; (3) five breeding males, at least five young fledged. WESTERN ISLES Three localities: (1) male seen with two young; (2) male mobbing Otter *Lutra lutra* in mid-June; (3) five adults present.

A better year on Fetlar, where, although the number of males declined by three, their rearing success improved enormously from the 5-8 young of 1998. In addition, successful breeding took place at another location in Shetland, as well as in the Western Isles, and probably also in Argyll.

Mediterranean Gull *Larus melanocephalus*

28 localities: 60-79 pairs, plus hybrid adult and first-year birds.

England, SW

Six localities: 20-25 pairs. DORSET One locality: two pairs probably bred. HAMPSHIRE Four localities: (1) 14 pairs fledged at least 17 young; (2)-(4) single pairs present, did not breed. ISLE OF WIGHT One locality: six pairs bred, but five washed out by tides, one young probably fledged.

England, SE

Seven localities: 24-30 pairs. ESSEX Four localities: (1)(2) two pairs each bred unsuccessfully; (3)(4) single pairs each reared one young. KENT One locality: 14 pairs bred, success unknown. SUSSEX Two localities: (1) four pairs fledged at least three young, five other pairs present; (2) pair present.

England, E

Nine localities: 13-18 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE One locality: adult present 13th March to 14th June. NORFOLK Five localities: (1) pair hatched one young, not known if fledged, two other pairs probably bred; (2)(3) single pairs bred; (4)(5) adult and juvenile in July at each, not known if bred locally. SUFFOLK Three localities: (1) four pairs



Tim Loseby

208. Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*, Shetland, June 1990.

bred, one young fledged; (2)(3) three pairs each fledged two young.

England, Central

One locality: 0-1 hybrid pair. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One locality: hybrid (presumed with Black-headed Gull *L. ridibundus*) adult and first-year birds present.

England, N

Four localities: 3-5 pairs. LANCASHIRE Three localities: (1) two pairs bred, success unknown; (2)(3) single territorial males, one throughout breeding season, the other to at least 9th May. YORKSHIRE One locality: pair bred unsuccessfully.

Scotland, N & W

One locality: 0-1 pair. ORKNEY One locality: territorial adult, April to mid-May.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	5	10	13	15	14	16	16	18	24	27	28
Confirmed (pairs)	6	11	15	19	15	16	18	31	33	54	60
Possible/ probable (pairs)	3	5	8	12	17	14	10	14	20	11	19
Max. total pairs	9	16	23	31	32	30	28	45	53	65	79

A further increase in localities, and in confirmed and total pairs. A total of only 27 young from 60 pairs, however, represents very poor productivity. High tides were responsible for some failures. No interbreeding by this species with Black-headed Gull was reported.

Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*

Three localities: one pair bred, plus two mixed pairs present.

England, SW

One locality: one pair. DORSET One locality: pair fledged two young.

England, SE

One locality: one mixed pair. SUFFOLK One locality: male hybridised with female Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*, but the clutch of three eggs was preyed on.

England, Central

One locality: one mixed pair. WORCESTERSHIRE One locality: female hybridised with male Lesser Black-backed Gull, two young hatched, but neither fledged.

A second successful breeding attempt by this species, following the first in 1997, but also the breeding of two mixed pairs.

Roseate Tern *Sterna dougallii*

Eight localities: 61-64 pairs breeding, fledging a minimum of 46 young.

England, E

One locality: one pair bred unsuceessfully, two other pairs displayed.

England, N

Three localities: (1) 34 pairs fledged 33 young; (2) four pairs fledged three young; (3) one non-breeding pair throughout summer.

Wales

Two localities: (1) three pairs fledged two young; (2) up to 23 birds seen around locality, but no pairs settled.

Scotland, Mid

One locality: nine pairs fledged eight young.

Northern Ireland

One locality: ten pairs bred, seven in specially designed nestboxes, but success unknown.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	17	15	13	15	18	14	15	11	14	11	8
Confirmed (pairs)	172	93	52	62	84	74	72	66	54	50	61
Possible/ probable (pairs)	5	31	5	10	21	24	13	9	1	7	3
Max. total pairs	177	124	57	72	105	98	85	75	55	57	64

An improvement, in terms of both numbers and productivity, despite a further serious drop in the number of colonies.

Little Tern *Sterna albifrons*

The following summary information has been received. For each area, it is based on a sample rather than a complete census.

Area	Pairs in 1997	Pairs in 1998	Pairs in 1999
England, SW	260	218	235
England, SE	182	152	103
England, E	561	642	776
England, NE	104	146	151
England, NW	9	42	50
Wales	80	45	86
Scotland	185	215	253
TOTALS	1,381	1,460	1,654

While coverage is not necessarily the same from year to year, the data for the last three years are presented here. These suggest that all areas apart from southeast England fared better in 1999 than in 1998. The latest estimate of the total British population was 2,430 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

The following information has been received, totalling between 1,493 and 1,520 pairs (compared with 1,578-1,584 in 1998). Several County Recorders emphasised that their information was incomplete, sometimes substantially so, and consequently their best estimates have been used.

England, SW
333 pairs. AVON 5. CORNWALL 7. DEVON 68. DORSET 9. GLOUCESTERSHIRE 23. HAMPSHIRE 60. ISLE OF WIGHT 17. SOMERSET 45. WILTSHIRE 99.

England, SE
228-248 pairs. BEDFORDSHIRE 3. BERKSHIRE 20-10. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE 22. ESSEX 60. HERTFORDSHIRE 1. KENT 10. OXFORDSHIRE 50. SURREY 10. SUSSEX 52.

England, E
241-251 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE 13. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH 12. LINCOLNSHIRE 89. NORFOLK 48. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE 42-49. SUFFOLK 40.

England, Central
75 pairs. DERBYSHIRE 25. LEICESTERSHIRE 4. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 8. SHROPSHIRE 8. STAFFORDSHIRE 3. WARWICKSHIRE 21. WORCESTERSHIRE 6.

England, N
291 pairs. CHESHIRE 11. CLEVELAND 2. CUMBRIA 85. GREATER MANCHESTER 7. LANCASHIRE 125. NORTHUMBERLAND 23. YORKSHIRE 38.

Wales
122 pairs. ANGLESEY 2. BRECON 20. CAERNARFON 4. CARMARTHEN 11. CEREDIGION 25. DENBIGH 2. GLAMORGAN 8. GWENT 4. MERIONETH 4. MONTGOMERY 36. PEMBROKE 6.

Scotland, S
86 pairs. AYR 3. BORDERS 84. LOTHIAN 2.

Scotland, Mid
19 pairs. ABERDEENSHIRE 1. CENTRAL 22. FIFE 3. MORAY & NAIRN 20.

Scotland, N & W
65 pairs. ARGYLL 61. HIGHLAND 4.

Coverage was good in many counties, although some others made estimates based on past surveys. There is also some variation in the way in which sightings of single birds are reported.

Common Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*

The following information has been received, totalling between 879 and 882 pairs (compared with 1,028-1,062 in 1998). Several County Recorders emphasised how incomplete their information was, and they have, therefore, used estimates.

England, SW
156 pairs. AVON 16. CORNWALL 1. DEVON 16. DORSET 11. GLOUCESTERSHIRE 20. HAMPSHIRE 45. SOMERSET 11.

England, SE
197-200 pairs. BERKSHIRE 25. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE 100. ESSEX 25-27. HERTFORDSHIRE 3. KENT 1. MIDDLESEX 5. SURREY 28-29. SUSSEX 10.

England, E
133 pairs. CAMBRIDGESHIRE 9. HUNTINGDON & PETERBOROUGH 16. LINCOLNSHIRE 5. NORFOLK 26. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE 37. SUFFOLK 40.
England, Central
76 pairs. DERBYSHIRE 3. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE 23. SHROPSHIRE 16. STAFFORDSHIRE 3. WARWICKSHIRE 16. WORCESTERSHIRE 15.
England, N
206 pairs. CHESHIRE 14. CLEVELAND 2. GREATER MANCHESTER 56. LANCASHIRE 100. NORTHUMBERLAND 22. TYNE & WEAR 4. YORKSHIRE 8.
Wales
63 pairs. BRECON 28. CARMARTHEN 3. CEREDIGION 1. DENBIGH 12. GWENT 4. MONTGOMERY 12. PEMBROKE 3.
Scotland, S
33 pairs. AYR 4. BORDERS 22. CLYDE 2. LOTHIAN 5.
Scotland, Mid
7 pairs. CENTRAL 4. FIFE 3.
Scotland, N & W
8 pairs. HIGHLAND 8.

The coverage was less complete than in 1998. We again take this opportunity to suggest to county bird clubs that survey work would be worthwhile, both to learn more about the status and distribution of the species and as a means of measuring river and stream quality.

Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

One locality: one singing male.

England, SW
GLOUCESTERSHIRE/WORCESTERSHIRE One area: a male, which sang regularly, was present from May to July in an area straddling the county boundary.

Although there was never any sign of a second bird, such a long-staying, and singing, male is unusual.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Two localities: pair bred and singing male.

Scotland, N & W
Two localities: (1) pair bred successfully, up to five young thought to have fledged; (2) singing male on one date in May, in suitable habitat.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	8	6	6	1	6	1	3	4	5	2	2
Confirmed (pairs)	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Possible/ probable (pairs)	7	6	5	2	5	1	3	4	4	2	1
Max. total pairs	8	6	6	2	6	1	3	4	5	2	2

A very welcome breeding record, at a different location from that at which successful nesting was reported in 1997.

Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*

The following county totals were received, which are compared with the results of the full census in 1997 (see page 372).

The five most significant counties for this species, Suffolk, Norfolk, Hampshire, Surrey and Nottinghamshire, all carried out variably complete surveys. The true figure for Hampshire, where coverage was patchy, is thought to be probably 300 pairs or more. With allowance for an incomplete survey in Dorset, and the absence of information from Sussex, the total can be directly compared with the census year of 1997 to suggest a continuing increase, especially in the more northerly counties of Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire.

Wood Lark County	Pairs in 1997	Pairs in 1998	Pairs in 1999
Cornwall	0	0	0
Devon	53	7	12
Dorset	105	54	66
Hampshire	294	174	179
Somerset	0	0	0
Wiltshire	3	2	9
Bedfordshire	1	1	0
Berkshire	63	2	40
Buckinghamshire	6	3	5
Essex	0	3	2
Kent	3	6	1
Surrey	171	134	135
Sussex	71	60	nc
Lincolnshire	37	40	51
Norfolk	248	326	364
Suffolk	457	459	474
Nottinghamshire	31	78	135
Staffordshire	7	3	0
Yorkshire	2	19	27
TOTALS	1,552	1,370	1,500

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*

One locality: single bird.

Scotland, N & W

HIGHLAND One locality: one bird present in suitable breeding habitat, and breeding was strongly suspected; locality not far from 1977 nest site.

This record follows the presence of a pair in another Highland locality in 1997.



Tim Loseby

209. Wood Lark *Lullula arborea*, Kent, April 1994.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

'White Wagtail' *M. a. alba*

Two localities: one seen carrying food, and another paired with Pied Wagtail *M. a. yarrellii*.

Scotland, N & W

ORKNEY One locality: one seen carrying food. SHETLAND One locality: one paired with a Pied Wagtail.

Previous records of this subspecies apparently breeding, including one in Orkney in 1998, have involved mixed pairings with Pied Wagtails. In 1999, the mate of the Orkney bird was not observed.

Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*

One locality: one bird in summer.

Scotland, N & W

ORKNEY One locality: one on 4th July.

The context of this unusual record is that there is only a handful of observations of this species staying in Scotland later than the middle of May, while the earliest known autumn record was at the end of August.

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

39 localities: 15-50 pairs breeding.

England, SW

Two localities: 0-2 pairs. ISLE OF WIGHT One locality: singing male. WILTSHIRE One locality: singing male.

England, SE

18 localities: 9-24 pairs. BERKSHIRE One locality: two pairs bred. ESSEX 11 localities: (1) two pairs bred; (2)(3) single pairs bred; (4) two or three singing males; (5)-(10) pairs present; (11) singing male. KENT Two localities: (1) pair bred, fledging eight young from two broods, plus two further pairs; (2) pair fledged five young. MIDDLESEX Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males. SURREY Two localities: (1) pair bred; (2) singing male.

England, E

11 localities: 5-16 pairs. LINCOLNSHIRE One locality: pair fledged four young. NORFOLK Four localities: (1) pair fledged two young; (2) four singing males; (3) three pairs; (4) singing male. SUFFOLK Six localities: (1)-(3) pairs bred successfully; (4) pair present; (5) singing male; (6) female in May.

England, Central

Two localities: 0-2 pairs. DERBYSHIRE One locality: pair present. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One locality: 0-1 pair.

England, N

Six localities: 1-6 pairs. GREATER MANCHESTER Three localities: (1) pair fledged three young; (2)(3) single singing males. LANCASHIRE Two localities: (1)(2) juveniles seen, probably bred locally. YORKSHIRE One locality: two juveniles seen, probably bred locally.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	56	50	36	44	53	66	58	46	67	71	39
Confirmed (pairs)	36	28	23	14	32	32	19	28	33	32	15
Possible/ probable (pairs)	46	46	46	57	44	63	63	37	66	59	35
Max. total pairs	82	74	69	71	76	95	82	65	99	91	50

A very disappointing year, with no records from the important areas in London and Birmingham city centres, nor from many localities in Kent.

Redwing *Turdus iliacus*

20 localities: 2-29 pairs breeding.

Scotland, N & W

17 localities: (1)(2) pairs bred; (3) four singing males; (4)-(9) two singing males at each; (10)-(17) single singing males.

Scotland, Mid

Three localities: (1)-(3) single singing males.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	38	17	15	13	22	15	9	28	7	15	20
Confirmed (pairs)	12	6	7	9	5	4	3	3	3	0	2
Possible/ probable (pairs)	39	15	13	15	22	15	11	35	14	18	27
Max. total pairs	51	21	20	24	27	19	14	38	17	18	29

A fairly typical set of records, which do not in any way reflect the true status of this species in Scotland, but the steady accumulation of information helps to define its range and more records are always appreciated.

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

555-563 'pairs' or singing males.

England, SW

329-335 pairs or singing males. AVON 11 singing males. CORNWALL Ten singing males. DEVON 75-80 singing males. DORSET 33 singing males. GLOUCESTERSHIRE One pair and two singing males. HAMPSHIRE 98-99 pairs or singing males. SOMERSET 86 singing males. WILTSHIRE One pair and 12 singing males.

England, SE

36 pairs or singing males. BERKSHIRE Two pairs and 13 singing males. ESSEX One singing male. HERTFORDSHIRE One pair. MIDDLESEX One singing male. OXFORDSHIRE One pair and 11 singing males. SUSSEX Two pairs and four singing males.

England, E

142-144 pairs or singing males. NORFOLK 123-125 singing males. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Four singing males. SUFFOLK One pair and 14 singing males.

England, Central

Four pairs or singing males. DERBYSHIRE One singing male (first county record). WORCESTERSHIRE One pair and two singing males.

Wales

41 pairs or singing males. ANGLESEY One pair and four singing males. CARMARTHEN 16 singing males. CEREDIGION & PEMBROKE One pair and three singing males. GLAMORGAN Three pairs and ten singing males. GWENT Six singing males.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. counties	15	21	17	18	21	23	25	28	24	27	24
Confirmed ('pairs')	12	19	27	15	11	14	15	nc	nc	nc	nc
Possible/ probable ('pairs')	196	326	214	283	306	318	426	574	361	491	555
Max. total 'pairs'	208	345	241	298	317	332	441	574	361	496	563

Higher numbers than those reported in 1998, with some evidence of a continued spread, notably the first record for Derbyshire.

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

Seven localities: 0-9 pairs breeding.

England, SE

Four localities: 0-4 pairs. KENT Three localities: (1) singing male during 10th-13th May; (2) singing male on 18th May and 8th July; (3) singing male from 1st June to 10th July. SUSSEX One locality: singing male during 17th-26th June.

England, E

One locality: 0-3 pairs. NORFOLK One locality: three singing males, one from 19th April to 21st July, a second from 29th April to 22nd May, and the third from 3rd May to 17th June.

England, Central

One locality: 0-1 pair. WORCESTERSHIRE One locality: singing male during 1st-19th May.

Wales

One locality: 0-1 pair. ANGLESEY One locality: singing male during 8th-11th June.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	13	5	13	13	5	7	2	3	4	2	7
Confirmed (pairs)	0	1	0	2	4	1	0	0	0	0	0
Possible/ probable (pairs)	17	9	16	20	4	9	3	3	5	2	9
Max. total pairs	17	10	16	22	8	10	3	3	5	2	9

An encouraging recovery after four very poor years, with several birds singing for prolonged periods.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

One locality: one singing male.

England, SE

KENT One locality: singing male on 26th May at Dungeness (*Brit. Birds* 93: 554).

A new species for these reports, although only a vagrant.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

22 localities: 3-29 pairs breeding.

England, SW

One locality: male on 24th May.

England, SE

Three localities: (1) up to four pairs present, but no nests found; (2) pair present, with male in full song during June; (3) singing male.

England, E

Ten localities: (1) pair bred, plus three singing males; (2)-(10) single singing males.

England, N

Seven localities: (1) pair fledged two young, second pair present; (2) pair fledged two young; (3) pair present, male singing; (4)-(7) single singing males.

Wales

One locality: singing male in June.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	10	12	15	13	15	22	16	11	17	10	22
Confirmed (pairs)	11	13	9	9	12	0	2	3	5	9	3
Possible/ probable (pairs)	11	11	23	26	46	48	29	19	27	15	26
Max. total pairs	22	24	32	35	58	48	31	22	32	24	29

The number of localities reporting the species increased, especially in eastern and northern England, and included the first record submitted to the Panel from Wales since 1986. For the first time in very many years, however, none was found in Worcestershire.

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus*

One locality: one singing male.

England, N

YORKSHIRE One locality: a singing male at Leventhorpe from 10th June to 5th July (*Brit. Birds* 93: 555).

This is the tenth consecutive year with at least one singing male, but, so far, none appears to have attracted a mate.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

One locality: one singing male.

Scotland, N & W

One locality: singing male on 8th June in suitable habitat.

A new locality, well away from that where probable breeding was recorded in 1998.

Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*

Up to 1,747 territories identified.

England, SW
County totals: DEVON 249, DORSET 317, HAMPSHIRE 396, ISLE OF WIGHT 9, SOMERSET 75, WILTSHIRE 3.
England, SE
County totals: BERKSHIRE 20, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE 2, SURREY 573, SUSSEX 83.
England, E
County totals: SUFFOLK 20.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. counties	5	8	8	7	11	10	12	12	11	12	11
Confirmed (pairs)	23	55	67	63	93	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc	nc
Possible/ probable (pairs)	499	873	634	863	1,053	1,675	1,679	552	915	947	1,747
Max. total pairs	522	928	701	926	1,146	1,675	1,679	552	915	947	1,747

A number of counties carried out more intensive surveys than at any time since the 1994 census. These revealed marked increases in Surrey (152-173 in 1994) and Sussex (34 in 1994), while the species is now firmly established in Suffolk (where none was recorded in 1994). The population is very likely to be well in excess of 2,000 pairs, since the 1994 figures for Dorset and Hampshire were 652-653 and 577-622, respectively. The 1998 breeding record in Wales (the first there) was not repeated this year, since the male, which had wintered on site, departed in mid-March.

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*

One locality: one singing male.

England, SW
DEVON One locality: first-summer male singing during 3rd-6th June, and possibly since mid-May (*Brit. Birds* 93: 556).

A new species for these reports.



David Tipling/Windrush

210. Dartford Warbler *Sylvia undata*, Dorset, March 1990

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus brehmii*

Two localities: two singing males.

England, SW

DEVON One locality: a singing male at Start Point during 6th-14th May. DORSET One locality: a singing male at Verne Common, Portland, from 25th April to at least 8th July. (*Brit. Birds* 93: 560)

A new species for these reports. The song is a key identification feature, and, as it becomes better known to birdwatchers, so we may expect more records.

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*

37 localities or areas: 3-103 pairs breeding.

England, SW

At least ten localities or areas: 1-53 pairs. GLOUCESTERSHIRE Two localities: (1)(2) single singing males. HAMPSHIRE County total of at least 41 singing males in four areas, including minimum of 24 in New Forest, where adults feeding young at one locality, and 11 in northeast of county. SOMERSET County total of a pair and four males. WILTSHIRE Three localities: (1) two pairs; (2) two males; (3) singing male.

England, SE

17 localities: 1-36 pairs. BERKSHIRE One area: pairs present at three sites. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE One locality: two or three pairs. ESSEX Two localities: (1) pair probably bred; (2) singing male. HERTFORDSHIRE One locality: pair bred, and two singing males. OXFORDSHIRE One locality: three singing males. SURREY Eight localities: (1) five pairs; (2) three pairs; (3) two pairs; (4) two singing males; (5)-(8) single singing males. SUSSEX Three localities: (1)-(3) two singing males.

England, E

Eight localities: 0-12 pairs. NORFOLK Five localities: (1)(2) two singing males; (3)-(5) single singing males. SUFFOLK Three localities: (1) three pairs; (2) pair; (3) singing male.

England, Central

One locality: 0-1 pair. DERBYSHIRE One locality: singing male on 16th May.

Wales

One locality: one pair. FLINT One locality: pair with young.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	52	48	19	15	20	41	35	35	26	30	37
Confirmed (pairs)	19	9	2	3	3	4	4	4	2	0	3
Possible/ probable (pairs)	112	88	20	16	25	62	52	56	46	62	100
Max. total pairs	131	97	22	19	28	66	56	60	48	62	103

This year's figures are much higher than those in 1998, with particularly good numbers in the Hampshire stronghold of the New Forest, and are probably close to the true total.

Bearded Tit *Panurus biarmicus*

The following information has been received, comprising 368-373 pairs.

England, SW

DORSET Nine pairs, HAMPSHIRE 18 pairs, best year on record. SOMERSET Five pairs.

England, SE

ESSEX 12-14 pairs at two localities, other sites not counted. KENT Five pairs. SUSSEX 22 pairs.

England, E

CAMBRIDGESHIRE One pair. LINCOLNSHIRE Four pairs. NORFOLK County total of 84-87 pairs at ten localities. SUFFOLK County total of 92 pairs at five sites.

England, N

LANCASHIRE 55 pairs, including 40 in nestboxes. NORTHUMBERLAND One pair, first breeding record for county. YORKSHIRE 60 pairs at one locality.

Scotland, Mid

MORAY & NAIRN Flock of two males and four females seen in October, and thought likely to have bred locally, although this is well known to be a dispersive species.

The total is slightly below the 384-396 pairs reported last year, but still within the 339-408 pairs estimated for 1992 by Campbell *et al.* (1996). Not all counties reported complete surveys.

Crested Tit *Parus cristatus*

Seven areas: up to 30 pairs reported.

Scotland, Mid
MORAY & NAIRN Two areas: (1) 12 pairs, but only three broods; (2) eight pairs fledged 41 young.

Scotland, N & W
HIGHLAND Five areas or localities: (1)-(5) total of ten pairs fledged 59 young.

These records were received from some local studies, and are still very incomplete. The estimated total population is 900 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

23 localities: 5-24 pairs breeding, producing a minimum of 13 young.

England, SE
Four localities: (1) pair in July; (2)(3) singing males in late May and June; (4) single bird seen.

England, E
51 sites visited, with presence of species confirmed at 18. Only five pairs confirmed as breeding, all of which were successful, fledging at least 13 young. Pairs were present at five other sites, singing males at a further six, plus singles at two others. Outside the main study area, a singing male was present at a former breeding locality in early July.

Wales
One locality: singing male in mid-May.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	29	38	27	37	33	34	34	22	23	19	24
Confirmed (pairs)	15	10	16	14	14	7	8	7	9	10	5
Possible/ probable (pairs)	22	32	12	23	19	28	27	15	15	12	19
Max. total pairs	37	42	28	37	33	35	35	22	24	22	24

The worst breeding season since 1986, blamed mostly on the poor summer weather.

The Panel is most grateful for the detailed information on the eastern England population supplied by the Golden Oriole Group.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Five localities: 1-5 pairs breeding.

England, SW
Two localities: (1) single male in mid-June; (2) single male in July to early August.

Scotland, N & W
Three localities: (1) pair bred, the female seen feeding a single young; (2)(3) adult males in suitable habitat in June.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	3	7	5	13	6	7	1	3	6	9	5
Confirmed (pairs)	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1
Possible/ probable (pairs)	6	7	4	12	6	7	1	3	5	9	4
Max. total pairs	6	8	5	13	6	8	1	3	6	9	5

Another confirmed breeding record from northern Scotland, but fewer sightings than in the last two years.

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

The following information was received:

Area	Occupied sites	Successful pairs	Young reared	Young/ territorial pair
Isle of Man	90	50	116	1.3
Wales				
Anglesey	15+	15	21+	1.4
Caernarfon	10+	10	31	3.1
Ceredigion	20	13	37	1.9
Glamorgan	3	2	3	1.0
Montgomery	1	1	3	3.0
Pembroke	55	45	120	2.2
Scotland				
Dumfries & Galloway	1	1	-	-
Colonsay & Oronsay	12	8	22	1.8
Islay	42	Not known	Not known	Not known
Mull	1	0	-	-
Northern Ireland				
Co.Antrim	2	0	-	-
TOTALS	252+	145	353+	1.4

Unlike in 1998, when 342 occupied sites were recorded, some areas were not surveyed fully, so the above data are incomplete.

Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla*

Five localities: 0-7 pairs.

Scotland, N & W

Five localities. ARGYLL Two localities: (1) two singing males on 13th May, possibly late migrants; (2) singing male on 28th June. HIGHLAND Three localities: (1) pair on 9th May in suitable habitat; (2) two singing males; (3) singing male.



B. R. Hughes/Windrush

211. Red-billed Choughs *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*, Isle of Man, May 1996.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	1	1	2	2	2	4	8	0	1	0	5
Confirmed (pairs)	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Possible/ probable (pairs)	1	1	2	3	1	4	8	0	1	0	5
Max. total pairs	1	1	2	3	2	4	8	0	1	0	5

A better showing than in the last three years.

Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*

The following information was received for England and Wales. Very few Scottish records were received, and these are not given here.

England, SW
HAMPSHIRE One pair bred. SOMERSET One juvenile in July, perhaps not locally bred.
England, SE
SUSSEX One pair bred.
England, E
SUFFOLK Two pairs bred.
England, Central
WORCESTERSHIRE 20 individuals at three localities.
England, N
CHESHIRE Breeding at one locality. LANCASHIRE Possible breeding at 3-5 localities.
Wales
BRECON Three pairs. CAERNARFON Two pairs. CARMARTHEN Pairs recorded at three localities. GLAMORGAN Two pairs.

These records represent a considerable reduction from the numbers reported in 1998. Several County Recorders commented on how scarce the species was in the early part of 1999.

Scottish Crossbill *Loxia scotica*

The following information was received.

Scotland, N & W
Four localities: total of eight pairs.

No data were received from the two main study areas, so this information is less complete than we should have liked.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus*

Two localities: little information available.

Scotland, N & W
Two localities: (1) pair fledged two young; (2) pair in suitable breeding habitat.

The status of this species continues to require further study.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Five localities: five singing males.

England, N
LANCASHIRE One locality: singing male in June.
Scotland, N & W
ARGYLL Four localities: (1) singing adult male in June; (2)-(4) single immature males singing, with the possibility that only two individuals were involved.

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
No. localities	3	3	1	13	6	6	5	6	8	7	5
Confirmed (pairs)	0	1	0	5	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Possible/ probable (pairs)	3	2	2	15	7	8	7	10	7	7	5
Max. total pairs	3	3	2	20	7	8	7	10	8	7	5

The poorest year since 1991. We include a table for this species for the first time for several years, in order to show just how unusual the events of 1992 were.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

Six areas or localities: up to 30 breeding pairs.

Scotland, Mid and N & W

Six areas or localities: up to 30 pairs or singing males.

The above is the result of limited survey work in one area, plus casual records, and is not representative of this species, which has an estimated UK breeding population of 70-100 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993).

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

453 territorial pairs.

England, SW

DEVON A full census was carried out for the second year running, revealing 453 pairs, exactly the same number as in 1998.

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Confirmed (pairs)	48	98	113	92	43	42	nc	nc	nc	nc
Possible/ probable (pairs)	85	143	207	269	369	337	337	380	455	453
Max. total pairs	133	241	320	361	412	379	337	380	455	453

No pairs were found in Cornwall in 1999, despite a thorough survey conducted by English Nature and RSPB, this being the only difference from the previous year.

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Occasional breeding by Western Reef Egret in eastern Spain

José Ignacio Dies, Josefa Prosper and Bosco Dies



Dan Powell

ABSTRACT On at least six occasions since the late 1980s, dark-morph Western Reef Egrets *Egretta gularis* of the nominate subspecies *gularis* have been observed during the breeding season at L'Albufera de Valencia, in eastern Spain. Three instances of breeding by mixed pairs of this species and Little Egret *E. garzetta* were recorded, in 1988, 1989 and 1990. In addition, apparent hybrids, with pale grey body and with variably extensive white on the head, wings and underparts (including in adult plumage), have been observed at this site repeatedly since 1993. There is no definite evidence for the occurrence of a dark morph of the Little Egret.

Several species of egret breed regularly in the West Palearctic. The largest of these, the Great White Egret *Egretta alba*, is very local, although it has become considerably commoner and expanded its range noticeably during the last decade, while the smallest is the Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* of southern and eastern parts of the region. Both species also occur commonly in other parts of the world. By far the most widespread and numerous, however, is the Little Egret *E. garzetta*, which breeds in

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southern Europe and eastwards through southern Asia to Australia, as well as locally in Africa, and which has recently colonised southern Britain and parts of eastern North America and the Caribbean. A fourth egret, the Western Reef Egret *E. gularis* is a coastal species, its nominate race breeding in West Africa from Mauritania south to Gabon, and the subspecies *schistacea* occurring from the Red Sea and East Africa east to India.

Of all these white-plumaged species, only the Western Reef Egret is known certainly to occur in both a white morph and a dark morph. Indeed, it is notable that, in the nominate subspecies, the dark morph is by far the predominant form. This egret has a debated taxonomic position, and was regarded as a subspecies of the more widespread Little Egret by Hancock & Kushlan (1984) and, more recently, by del Hoyo *et al.* (1992) and Kushlan & Hafner (2000).

Western Reef Egrets have been recorded regularly in Europe, particularly in the southern countries, such as France (Dubois & Yésou 1992), Italy (Grussu 1993) and Spain (Diaz *et al.* 1996), and more scarcely in others. European records of Western Reef Egrets have, however, been obscured by the observation of dark egrets of uncertain identity, although these have sometimes been identified as dark-morph Little Egrets (Cramp & Simmons 1977; Grussu & Poddesu 1989; Dubois & Yésou 1992). Nevertheless, breeding by confirmed or suspected Western Reef Egrets, apparently paired with Little Egrets, has occurred in France in 1957 and irregularly since 1986 (Dubois & Yésou 1995; Kayser *et al.* 2000). In addition, slate-grey egrets are occasionally present in Little Egret colonies in southwestern Spain (Bernis 1969; M. Fernández-Cruz verbally).



Victor Ciscar

212. Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis* of nominate subspecies *gularis* in heronry, l'Albufera de Valencia, east Spain, June-July 1988.

Western Reef Egrets in eastern Spain

L'Albufera de Valencia, in eastern Spain, is a shallow coastal lagoon, 21,000 ha in extent, and is separated from the adjacent Mediterranean Sea by a continuous 30-km barrier island. Some time after the sixteenth century, the salinity of the lagoon waters altered as a result of freshwater catchment from inland tributaries and the building of sluices at the outlets, the latter designed to prevent seawater inflow and to favour agricultural uses. About 70% of the original lagoon surface has been transformed, through drainage and impoundment, mostly into rice fields. The remaining lagoon has dense stands of halophytic vegetation in the form of beds of Common Reed *Phragmites australis*.

Seven species of heron (Ardeidae) breed at l'Albufera de Valencia (Dies *et al.* 1999), their total population perhaps exceeding 6,000 pairs. These include up to 15% of the Spanish breeding population of Little Egret and Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* and 30% of the country's Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* (Prosper 2000). Colonies are situated on top of reedbeds within the lagoon water-



Sebastià Hernandis

213 & 214. Western Reef Egret *Egretta gularis* of nominate subspecies *gularis* in heronry, l'Albufera de Valencia, east Spain, June-August 1990.



Sebastià Hernandis

body, occupying islands or extensive reedbed fringes at the shores. Excluding the Grey Heron, which starts nest-building in December, the heronries are reoccupied during April. During the last decade or so, the breeding population of Little Egret in l'Albufera de Valencia ranged between about 900 and 3,000 pairs (Dies *et al.* 1999).

Since the late 1980s, Western Reef Egrets of the nominate West African subspecies have been observed during the breeding season at this site. Single adults were recorded from 26th June to 29th July 1988 (plate 212), from 10th June to 1st August 1989, from 14th June to 9th August 1990 (plates 213 & 214), from 17th April to 1st July 1991, and on 6th May 1995; and a subadult was present in 1999, from 24th May to 17th June. All of these individuals were of the dark grey (slate-grey) morph, with white restricted to the chin and, to a variable extent, the upper throat and lower ear-coverts. They showed a greenish to yellowish colour on the lores, and had a deep-based, blackish to brownish bill with paler tip.

On three occasions during this period, breeding by Western Reef Egret was confirmed, in each case apparently paired with a Little Egret. In 1988, a mixed pair was present at a nest containing two chicks; in 1989, a mixed pair attended an inaccessible nest; and, in 1990, an adult Western Reef Egret attended a nest with four chicks.

There is no detailed description of the hybrid juveniles produced in these three instances of breeding, although chicks found in 1990 were noted as having a pied plumage. Nevertheless, observations of suspected hybrid egrets have been made repeatedly at l'Albufera de Valencia since 1993. These individuals exhibited odd-coloured plumage, with a pale grey body and with white of variable extent on the head, wings and underparts, even in adult plumage. Their bare-part colours did not differ from

those of Little Egret. Records considered to relate to hybrids involve the following: a subadult on 2nd-16th May 1993, a juvenile on 22nd August 1994, a juvenile on 16th August 1995, an adult on 18th June 1997, and a subadult from 26th November 1997 to 3rd March 1998 (plate 215).

In June 1992, a juvenile Little Egret showing some ash-grey colour in the plumage was found in a colony at l'Albufera de Valencia. The grey colouring extended to a few upperpart feathers, with small grey tips to the wing-coverts, and some grey marks on the scapulars, the tertials and the outer web of some secondary feathers (plate 216). This egret, which we captured and marked, subsequently moulted into normal adult Little Egret plumage, without showing further grey traces, and with adult bare-part colours also matching those described for Little Egret. It was recorded regularly until 1996.

Concluding remarks

The existence of a dark morph of the Little Egret has in recent years been considered by no means well founded (Yésou & CHN 1986; Grussu 1993; Magyar & Yésou 2000). Furthermore, Parasharya & Naik (1984) reported interbreeding between Little Egret and Western Reef Egret of the eastern subspecies *schistacea* in Gogha, western India, in a syntopic transitional zone between inland regions and the coast, where Little Egrets had entered colonies of *schistacea*. Those authors suggested that juvenile Little Egrets with grey-splashed plumage were the result of a regular gene flow from coastal populations of reef egrets. The dark marks on the juvenile in eastern Spain, described above (see also plate 216), are certainly not usual for Little Egret, and are thought to be a sign of hybridisation (P. Yésou *in litt.*).

Intriguingly, a group of Little Egrets observed well inland in southeastern Morocco in April 1997 contained a single dark-morph individual which appeared to be identical in structure and bare-part coloration to the accompanying white egrets, and was considered more likely to be a Little Egret than a Western Reef Egret (van den Berg 1999). Unfortunately, the matter is complicated by the fact that some Western Reef Egrets of the nominate race can be almost impossible to separate from Little Egrets, even by structure and bare parts (Dubois & Yésou 1995). On the other hand, one could question the likelihood that a reef egret, typically a coastal bird, would turn up 400 km from the sea.

An interesting article on this subject was published by Crewe (2001), who recognised the magnitude of the problem while by no means dismissing the possibility that the Little Egret could occur, albeit extremely rarely, in a dark morph.

It is hoped that this additional evidence from L'Albufera de Valencia of the presence of the Western Reef Egret in southern Europe, and its occasional breeding there in mixed pairs with Little Egret, may help to further a better understanding of the identity of these dark egrets.



José Ignacio Dies

215. Suspected hybrid between Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* and Western Reef Egret *E. gularis*, l'Albufera de Valencia, east Spain, March 1998.



José Ignacio Dies

216. Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* showing grey-marked plumage, l'Albufera de Valencia, east Spain, June 1992.

Acknowledgments

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Lack of territorial defence by male Yellowhammers

Peter Oliver

The Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella* is widely reported to be territorial during the breeding season (e.g. Cramp & Perrins 1994). Andrew (1956) suggested that Yellowhammers maintain largely linear territories along hedgerows, and referred to males driving off other males that approached nearer than about 30 m, while Sundberg (1992) reported the species to be territorial in Sweden, where 60% of fights between males occurred when an intruder approached to within 25 m of the territory-holder. This article describes my observations of the behaviour of Yellowhammers at Limpsfield Chart, Surrey, which are not consistent with such territorial behaviour.

Study area and methods

The study area consists of some 11.7 ha of relict heath, with saplings, bracken *Pteridium* and scattered mature trees. It is bounded by stands of pines *Pinus*, secondary woodland, and a few houses with gardens, with farmland beyond. Yellowhammers occur regularly from late February to August, and a few appear briefly from September to early November, but in winter they are mostly absent. Within the study area, I concentrated on a section of some 1.9 ha containing seven regularly used advertising posts. There were at least 11 other such posts in the rest of the study area.

Between February and August, I made a total of 140 visits to the area, 66 of these in 1997 and 74 in 1998. Less intensive observations were also carried out in 1996 and 1999. Visits were mostly before 09.00 hours, and I noted the presence and activity of all Yellowhammers seen, and mapped the advertising posts used. Males advertised their presence by singing and calling regularly from these prominent perches, which were invariably near the top of tall (10-20 m high), isolated trees, and were typically used repeatedly from year to year. Males spent only short periods at these posts, soon flying off into adjacent scrub, or leaving the area completely. An advertising post would often be reoccupied quite quickly, but was sometimes used successively by different males (see below). It could not, therefore, be assumed that it was always the same male using a particular advertising post.

Results and discussion

Whenever I was aware of a male's activity immediately before it left an advertising post, I recorded the details. The results are



Robin Chittenden

217. Male Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*, Norfolk, May 1995.

Table 1. Behaviour of male Yellowhammers *Emberiza citrinella* before leaving the study area, Limpsfield Chart, Surrey, 1997-98.

Activity immediately before departure from advertising post	Number of instances
Advertising	16 (64%)
Silent, unaccompanied	4 (16%)
Silent, accompanied by another male	1 (4%)
Silent, accompanied by female	3 (12%)
Chased off intruding male	1 (4%)
Total	**25**

shown in table 1. The majority of males left directly from the posts, and disappeared from the study area, heading towards farmland. Only once did I see an unaccompanied female leave the area.

Sometimes, two males perched close together in the same advertising tree, often only 0.5 m apart, without any discernible reactions by either one. On other occasions, the appearance of a second male would lead to a violent skirmish. Such fights normally lasted only a few seconds, the males flying at one another, with a female frequently embroiled. The varying behaviour recorded on the occasions when two males were seen together in the same advertising tree is detailed in table 2. This reveals that in the majority of cases (16 out of 22, over 70%) when an intruding male was driven from the advertising post, or a fight resulted, a female was known to be present. It also demonstrates that, in approximately one-third of cases (11 out of 35) when two males were together, there was no apparent aggression.

On at least six occasions, I was able to confirm that different males used the same advertising post. This was established by the observation of one of two types of behaviour: (i) two males successively using the same post, or (ii) the same male using in succession two different posts which had previously been (or were subsequently) used simultaneously by two different males. There was strong circumstantial evidence of different males using the same advertising post on at least four further occasions. Once, an extra-pair copulation was attempted when a female flew into a tree and perched close to an advertising male. A second male flew in and almost immediately mounted the female; several skirmishes followed, and the female was mounted a second time by one of the males. Neither mating attempt appeared to be successful.

In contrast to the 22 cases in which one male drove off an intruder from an advertising post (table 2), on only nine occasions did I see a male leaving a perch to chase another male (table 3), such pursuits involving flights of 30-100 m. On one of these occasions, a male that had previously

Table 2. Behaviour of male Yellowhammers *Emberiza citrinella* when joined by a second male at an advertising post, Limpsfield Chart, Surrey, 1997-98.

Behaviour when joined by intruding male	Female present	No female seen	All observations
No reaction	-	7	7
Original male departed	1	3	4
Display only	-	1	1
Intruder chased, but remained in tree	-	1	1
Intruder driven from tree, or fought	16	6	22
Totals	**17**	**18**	**35**

Table 3. Chasing behaviour of male Yellowhammers *Emberiza citrinella*, Limpsfield Chart, Surrey, 1997-98.

Behaviour	Female present	No female seen	All observations
Chase launched from advertising post	1	5	6
Chase launched from other perch	3	-	3
Totals	**4**	**5**	**9**

been advertising appeared to defend a female rather than a physieal area. After he had driven off the intruder, a female joined him and for twenty minutes the male followed her elosely. During this period, there was another fight with a rival male, and an attempted eopulation by one of the males.

The fact that different males used the same advertising post demonstrates that individual posts were not constantly defended as an exelusive territory. This is further emphasised by the laek of aggression between two males when present together at the same post, except when a female was present. Only comparatively rarely did males chase an intruder that was encountered away from an advertising post, and there was no evidence of boundary disputes between males. The recorded behaviour, therefore, eombined with regular departures from the study area by males that had been advertising, suggests that males did not attempt to defend a defined, spatial territory. Rather, the evidence obtained, together with the observation that aggression between males oceurred mainly in the presenee of females, would appear to suggest that males were more intent on attraeting and defending a female. This is eontrary to the aeeepted view that male Yellowhammers defend territories.

The laek of territory maintenanee would be eonsistent with a regime whereby males seek to attraet and mate with as many females as possible. The need for a defended territory would also be reduced if foraging took plaee mainly away from the advertising and nesting area. In both 1997 and 1998, at least one male was observed bringing in food for its young from outside the study area, probably from nearby farmland. In Sweden, Sundberg (1992) and Sundberg & Dixon (1996) demonstrated frequent extra-pair paternity, and found that males did not rigorously guard their mates. In the Limpsfield Chart study area, males evidently regularly left their mates unguarded, and there was evidenee for attempted extra-pair eopulations.

Kyrkos (1997) observed that there is still disagreement about the preeise function of Yellowhammer territories, which may provide all of the requirements for breeding, or just the nest site and part of the food, or simply the nest site, or the food, alone (see Hinde 1956). The Limpsfield Chart study indicates that a further variation in the breeding habits of this speeies may oeeur. It also suggests that population surveys based on the presence of singing males may not give an aeeurate assessment of the number of breeding males aetually present.



Robin Chittenden

218. Male Yellowhammer *Emberiza citrinella*, Norfolk, May 1995.

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P. J. Oliver, The Briar Patch, Limpsfield Chart, Oxted, Surrey RH8 0TL

Notes

White Pelicans breeding in Bulgaria

The White Pelican *Pelecanus onocrotalus* bred regularly in the Mandra-Burgas marshes, along the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria, until at least 1944 (Prostov 1964), with sporadic breeding recorded until 1958 (Arabadjiev 1974). In 1966, two pairs of White Pelicans attempted to breed in the Srebarna Nature Reserve, near the Danube, but this attempt failed (Paspaleva & Mitchev 1968).

The Srebarna reserve, of some 900 ha, has been established for over 50 years, and is well known for its colony of Dalmatian Pelicans *P. crispus* (Mitchev & Crivelli 1998). The numbers of that species breeding on the reserve decreased, however, during the 1990s, owing to the lack of suitable nesting habitat. With the help of a grant from *Swarovski Optik* to Le Balkan-Bulgaria Foundation, artificial platforms and a hide were completed in 1999, resulting in immediate success. Seven pairs of Dalmatian Pelicans nested on the pile-platforms in 1999, and ten pairs used them in 2000.

In early May 2000, 18-20 White Pelicans were observed at Srebarna. Between 10th and 16th May, two nests were built, and these were found to contain clutches of, respectively, one and two eggs. On 17th May, when the pelican colony was disturbed by a low-flying aircraft, the nest containing two eggs was preyed on by Magpies *Pica pica*. The egg in the remaining nest hatched on 15th June. Some five weeks later, between 18th and 21st July, the chick was discovered underneath the pile-platform; clearly, it had left the nest of its own accord, and the parents continued to feed it there. It fledged successfully at an age of eleven weeks (see Crivelli *et al.* 2000).

In 2001, up to 30 adult White Pelicans were present at Srebarna during the spring but, unfortunately, none attempted to breed.

The first successful breeding by White Pelicans in Bulgaria in more than 40 years is promising. In autumn 2001, the Foundation will install a new, floating raft, 25 m² in size, which will increase the provision of suitable nesting sites for both species of pelican. In view of the vulnerable status of the White Pelican within the Palearctic, the re-establishment of a breeding colony of the species in Bulgaria is of particular significance (Crivelli *et al.* 2000).

Thanks are due to *Swarovski Optik* for the funding to carry out improvements within the pelican colony, and to the Tour du Valat Foundation, which has funded the monitoring programme for breeding pelicans at the Srebarna Nature Reserve. Milen Yanakiev, employed by Le Balkan-Bulgaria Foundation, carried out most of the observations.

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Melanistic Cattle Egret

There has been much debate about the possible occurrence of melanistic Little Egrets *Egretta garzetta*, the main problem being similarities between any such birds and dark-morph Western Reef Egrets *E. gularis* and the possibility of hybrids between the two

species. In their excellent paper, Dubois & Yésou (*Brit. Birds* 88: 307-319) presented some evidence to support the existence of melanistic (grey) Little Egrets.

On 19th November 1995, I obtained further evidence of melanism among white herons when I saw a grey Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* of the race *coromandus* at Dona Paula, Goa, India. It accompanied two 'normal' Cattle Egrets, and its behaviour and structure were typical of that species. Its plumage was pale to medium grey, and uniform, although the wings were rather patchy; the colour was very similar to that of the grey egret in plate 84 of Dubois & Yésou's paper and, as on that bird, its primaries appeared somewhat paler than the rest of the plumage, this being very obvious in flight. Apart from its grey coloration, the melanistic Cattle Egret differed from its two companions only in its slightly more orange bill and legs, but these bare-part colours do vary among 'normal-plumaged' individuals.

The possibility exists that this individual had been stained or coloured by some contaminant in the water at Dona Paula, although, with a gregarious species such as the Cattle Egret, one might have expected to see more than one individual affected. In contrast to the Little Egret, there are no species for which a melanistic Cattle Egret could be mistaken, and the possibility of hybridisation can reasonably be discounted.

I can find no reference to melanistic Cattle Egrets; clearly, they must be very rare indeed. There is, however, an illustration of such an individual in Sibley (2000, *The North American Bird Guide*).

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EDITORIAL COMMENT We agree that the grey coloration, evidently uniform, seems unlikely to be the result of contamination, unless effected by deliberate human action. We would welcome further reports of dark-plumaged Cattle Egrets, in order to learn more about the variability and occurrence of such individuals.

Aberrant Blue Tit resembling Azure Tit hybrid

On 24th January 2001, unusually large numbers of tits *Parus* were visiting the feeder in my garden, and during the morning I caught sight of a small individual with a white head. I managed only brief views before it flew off, but later that day, as the weather improved, the tit returned, and I was able to watch it on the feeder, with both Great Tits *P. major* and up to seven different Blue Tits *P. caeruleus* for comparison. At this point, although I had earlier considered the possibility that the white-headed bird was a Blue Tit × Azure Tit *P. cyanus* hybrid, I became convinced that it was merely an aberrant Blue Tit, since I could determine no differences in size or structure from any of the accompanying Blue Tits.

DESCRIPTION The head was entirely white, except for a dark line through the eye to the nape, as on Azure Tit, although with a trace of dark feathering at the junction of crown and forehead. The nape was grey, while the mantle colour was similar to that of Blue Tit, with some paler flecking. The wings were blue, but with conspicuous white edges to the outer primaries (though lacking white tips to the other remiges), with white tips to the greater coverts forming a broad wingbar. The tail was completely white, as were the uppertail-coverts and undertail-coverts. The throat was white, entirely lacking any trace of a neck collar and bib, the white ending abruptly and contrasting with the otherwise wholly yellow underparts.

According to *BWP* (Vol. 7), Azure Tit of the '*flavipectus* group' (with a population in Central Asia, and another in the Huang Ho valley, China) has yellow underparts like a Blue Tit, but otherwise resembles the western, nominate race of Azure Tit; there are also hybrid forms between Blue Tit and Azure Tit, known as 'Pleske's Tit', in the European parts of the former USSR, but no descriptions are given. The entirely white tail of the bird in my garden was, however, the clinching feature and is, I believe, sufficient to identify this as a partial albino Blue Tit.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT An example of 'Pleske's Tit' is illustrated on page 317 of *Collins Bird Guide* (Svensson *et al.* 1999). It is worth pointing out, however, that hybrids between Blue and Azure Tits are rare, and are also variable in appearance. Three variants are depicted in S. Harrap's monograph (1996, *Tits, Nuthatches & Treecreepers*), the text of which also includes the following: 'Hybrid Azure × Blue Tits show a wide range of characters, with a darker cap than Azure Tit, varying from lavender-grey to blue or even black, pale greyish upperparts, much less white in the tail, with only the outer web of T6 white and T5 very finely fringed white (thus more white than Blue Tit), reduced white in the tertials and greater coverts (wingbar c. 3–5 mm deep, compared with 2–3.5 mm on Blue Tit and 12–13 mm on Azure Tit), and a gradation of patterns on the underparts, from traces of a dark collar, through a dark bib to a yellowish wash. Hybrids also occur in which the characters of one species are very slightly indicated, ...'. As Pete Kinnear states, the all-white tail and tail-coverts would suggest that the tit which he observed was, indeed, a partially albino Blue Tit.

Azure Tit populations breeding in the mountains of Central Asia and in northern China (northeast Qinghai) are often treated as a separate species, the Yellow-breasted Tit *P. flavipectus*. They have a yellow breast and could be confused with 'Pleske's Tit' (Harrap 1996), but are unlikely to appear as vagrants in western Europe.

Common Ravens imprisoned on the nest

I read with interest the note concerning a Common Raven *Corvus corax* imprisoned on a nest on Eday, Orkney (*Brit. Birds* 94: 147-148). In over 30 years of monitoring breeding Common Ravens on Mainland, Orkney, I have never seen an adult bird trapped in this manner, but every year I find at least one young with its legs entangled in the nest lining. The material involved is usually binder twine, but nylon cord, similar to that used in fishing nets, has been the cause on several occasions. Often, the legs are so firmly attached to the lining that it is impossible to lift the chick away from it. Because of this problem, I routinely carry a pair of sharp scissors when visiting nests to ring the young. Even so, it can still be a difficult operation to free the chicks.

In most cases, the trapped young show no difference in development or weight when compared with others in the brood. Furthermore, the number of young in a brood seems to have no bearing on whether any of the chicks may be entangled. I have found just as many such incidents in broods of one or two as in broods of five or six.

Chris Booth
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EDITORIAL COMMENT Ian Carter has commented: 'Binder twine is known to cause mortality in other corvids, notably Carrion Crows *C. corone* and Rooks *C. frugilegus*, which incorporate it into the lining of their nest, together with other soft, man-made materials. It also represents a danger to certain birds of prey such as the Hobby *Falco subbuteo*, which frequently takes over corvid nests containing the material, and the Red Kite *Milvus milvus*, which uses man-made materials, including twine, as nest decoration. Binder twine separates easily into numerous thin, but strong, threads, which can very easily become entangled around the legs of young in the nest. The threads sometimes become tightly wound around the legs of a nestling and, by restricting the circulation, can lead to the loss of a leg or foot. Another danger is that young may become suspended below the nest when attempting their first flight. A well-known, related, problem occurs with synthetic fishing nets, often incorporated into the nests of Northern Gannets *Morus bassanus*, and thought to result in the death of hundreds of birds at British colonies each year.'

Letters

The first record of Slavonian Grebe in Britain

Prompted by W. R. P. Bourne's letter (*Brit. Birds* 94: 209), I feel compelled to set the record straight on a more widely quoted incorrect date. The first British occurrence of the Slavonian Grebe *Podiceps auritus* is invariably given as 1796 (e.g. Yarrell 1843; Fisher 1966; Palmer 2000). Col. George Montagu, in his *Ornithological Dictionary of British Birds* (1802), notes that 'this bird, which was rescued from the hands of a fisherman as he was just going to pick it, was killed, near Truro, in Cornwall, on the fourth of May, 1796, and presented to us by a friend. It was a male bird, and is now in our museum.'

Recently, I finished editing Montagu's 'Natural History Diary' (now in the Natural History Museum, London), which covers the period 26th April 1796 to 15th December 1799. Much of the Diary deals with his stay in Cornwall, and also with his time in South Devon, where he settled in 1798. It is evident that Montagu published the wrong year in his *Dictionary*, since the Diary clearly attributes the record to 1797. The following is the opening extract: '[1797] On the 4th of May, Mr Wyck brought me a bird which from Latham's description seems to be the Horned Grebe of his work...'. This is followed by a full description, as published in his *Dictionary*.

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The identity of the British record of Red-necked Nightjar

The Red-necked Nightjar *Caprimulgus ruficollis* is a large, migratory nightjar that breeds in the Iberian Peninsula and northwest Africa and winters largely in western Africa. Two distinct races are recognised: *C. r. ruficollis* is a greyish-brown form that occurs in Spain, Portugal and Morocco, while *C. r. desertorum* is a paler, sandier form, often tinged rufous, that breeds in northeast Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia (Cleere 1998; Cramp 1985; Snow & Perrins 1998).

As with most migratory species, the Red-necked Nightjar is at times found well outside its normal range. It is occasionally recorded in France and the Balearic Islands, and vagrants have so far been reported from Denmark, Italy, Malta, Libya, the Canary Islands and Madeira. The sole British record is of a bird shot at Killingworth, near Newcastle, Tyne & Wear, on 5th October 1856 (Hancock 1862a,b). Vagrancy would seem more likely to stem from an overshooting spring migrant, so this autumn record, if genuine, probably represents reverse migration.

The subspecific identity of the Killingworth nightjar does not appear to have been confirmed, although it has been suggested (Bannerman 1955) that it belongs to the northwest African population (*desertorum*). Although I have not seen or examined the specimen, which is currently in the Hancock Museum in Newcastle, a colour photograph of it is published in Palmer (2000). This clearly shows a greyish-brown bird, not a sandy-grey or rufescent one, and, even though the specimen is faded, I would suggest that it appears to belong to the nominate race rather than to *C. r. desertorum*.

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News and comment

Compiled by Bob Scott and Wendy Dickson

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of *British Birds*

New President designate for BOU

The name Chris Perrins will always be linked, ornithologically, with Oxford, both with the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology and with *BWP*. Chris has recently agreed to take on the role of President of the British Ornithologists' Union when Ian Newton retires in 2002.

David Snow honoured

A recent taxonomic review of the genus *Lipaugus* of cotingas (Cotingidae) concluded that two species, *L. subalaris* (Grey-tailed Piha) and *L. cryptolophus* (Olivaceous Piha), should be placed in a separate genus (Prum 2001, *Ibis* 143: 307-309). David Snow was the first to suggest, in 1982, that these two Andean green pihas may be only distantly related to the other piha species in the genus *Lipaugus*. Richard Prum has named the new genus *Snowornis*, in honour of David Snow 'for his many contributions to our understanding of the ecology, behaviour and systematics of the cotingas and manakins, and for his original insights into the role of frugivory in the evolution of polygyny and lek behaviour'. David will probably be better known to most British birdwatchers for his classic work *A Study of Blackbirds* (1958), and, more recently, as co-editor (with Chris Perrins) of *BWP Concise*.

Being honoured by having a bird genus named after one is not unique for a British zoologist, but it does place David Snow among a very select group of 24 or 25, including Blyth, Bulwer, Newton and Sclater. You can check the others by reference to James Jobling's book *A Dictionary of Scientific Bird Names* (1991). We offer David our warmest congratulations.

Birds and mammals

The British Trust for Ornithology and the Mammal Society are calling for volunteers to assist with a new project. The two organisations have been awarded a government contract to design and run a mammal-monitoring project this coming winter. It is hoped that the BTO's expertise in volunteer survey work, coupled with the Mammal Society's knowledge of land mammals in Britain, will provide a sound platform for future mammal-monitoring in this country. To find out more, or to volunteer to take part in the trial, contact Mike Toms at BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU, email: mammals@bto.org

New RSPB reserves

The RSPB has recently announced that the island of Mousa, east of Mainland, Shetland, has become its newest reserve, thanks to an agreement between the Society, the owner and the crofting tenants. Mousa is world-famous for its 2,000-year-old Iron Age broch, designated as a World Heritage Site, while the island is also home to around 6,000 European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus*, many of which nest within the broch's 13-m-high walls. A night-time visit to the island from nearby Sandwick, to watch the changeover of adults on nest duty, is a unique and unforgettable experience. In addition, an important colony of Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea* and some 100 pairs of Black Guillemots *Cepphus grylle* breed on Mousa, together with smaller numbers of Arctic Skuas *Stercorarius parasiticus*, Great Skuas *Catharacta skua* and a few Atlantic Puffins *Fratercula arctica*. Mousa is equally famous for its population of over 400 Common Seals *Phoca vitulina* and small numbers of Atlantic Grey Seals *Halichoerus grypus*.

Also in the northern isles, the RSPB has acquired its 170th reserve, at Brodgar, Orkney, famous for its Neolithic 'Ring of Brodgar', another World Heritage Site. Although the new reserve will be managed principally for its range of breeding wetland species, including Common Redshank *Tringa totanus* and Common Snipe *Gallinago gallinago*, it is also hoped that suitable conditions can be provided for nesting Corn Crakes *Crex crex*.

Farther south, the Society has acquired Silverdale Moss, near Leighton Moss, Lancashire, where it is envisaged that a major reedbed development will benefit the local breeding population of Great Bitterns *Botaurus stellaris*. Finally, at Otmoor, in Oxfordshire, the highly successful wader populations, which have more than doubled since the RSPB acquired the site, will doubtless appreciate the addition of a further 47 ha to the reserve.

Birdwatching in the Pyrénées

All birdwatchers visiting the Pyrenees and the Aquitaine region of France are invited to submit their observations to the newly created Groupe Ornithologique des Pyrenees et de l'Ardour. The group publishes a detailed annual report in the magazine *Le Casseur d'Os* (the bone-breaker, a colloquial name for the Lammergeier *Gypaetus barbatus*), and all contributions are welcome. Send your observations to GOPA, M. J. C. du Lau, 81 Avenue du Loup, 64000 Pau, France.

A new Western Palearctic robin?

Periodically, the journal *Dutch Birding* publishes articles in a series entitled 'Trends in systematics'. A recent contribution (vol. 23: 140-146) reports on an investigation of the Robin *Erithacus rubecula* population on the Canary Islands, paying particular attention to the subspecies *E. r. superbus* inhabiting Gran Canaria and Tenerife. From an examination of song, calls and plumage, it is concluded that *superbus* ('Tenerife Robin') should be treated as an allospecies within the superspecies *E. rubecula*. Morphologically, this form is distinguished by its darker red throat and breast, more extensive and conspicuous grey surrounding the red, and, most strikingly, a prominent pale (almost white) eye-ring.

Improved protection for the Danube Delta?

On World Environment Day 2000, an agreement was signed by the environmental ministers of Romania, Moldova and Ukraine concerning the creation and management of a cross-border protected area between these three countries in the Danube Delta and the lower River Prut protected areas. The Danube Delta has suffered greatly in the past, and all eyes are on the politicians of the post-communist era to see what can now be saved. Agreements and designations are all very well, but only action on the ground will really count. Unfortunately, experience tells us that such an agreement should be only the start of the story and is on its own not necessarily a cause for celebration.

OBC meetings

In 2001, the Oriental Bird Club will meet at Blakeney Village Hall, Norfolk, on Sunday 26th August, with the AGM taking place at London Zoo Meeting Rooms on Saturday 1st December. At both events, an oriental bazaar and food will be available. For more information, visit the OBC website (www.orientalbirdclub.org).

Rarities Committee news

BBRC changes the evaluation of 'either/or' records

At this year's Annual General Meeting of the British Birds Rarities Committee, held on 10th March, it was decided to change the way in which the Committee considers records of certain hard-to-identify species.

Traditionally, BBRC has accepted 'either/or' records for some groups, such as the pratincoles *Glareola* and the bee-eaters *Merops*, which had previously been regarded as exceptionally difficult to identify to species level, but straightforward to identify generically. In addition, the same procedure was adopted for species pairs which have, until comparatively recently, been treated as a single species, such as American *Pluvialis dominica* and Pacific Golden Plovers *P. fulva*, and Short-billed *Limnodromus griseus* and Long-billed Dowitchers *L. scolopaceus*.

In the past, these records have been assessed and subsequently published in the BBRC's annual Report on rare birds in Great Britain (the 'Rarities report'), in order to help in determining vagrancy patterns. Such patterns are now much clearer, while improvements in both the identification literature and optical equipment have made specific identification in many cases much easier. Consequently, for some of these groups, there are now no valid reasons for including records of individuals that are not specifically identified. On the other hand, BBRC will continue to assess 'either/or' records relating to groups for which there is still considerable doubt over identification criteria, including frigatebirds *Fregata*, the 'soft-plumaged petrel' complex *Pterodroma mollis/feae/madeira*, and Western *Phylloscopus bonelli* and Eastern Bonelli's Warblers *P. orientalis*.

From 1st January 2002, BBRC will, therefore, no longer consider generic identifications of albatrosses *Diomedea*, pratincoles, 'lesser golden plover' (*Pluvialis dominica/fulva*), dowitchers and bee-eaters. Submitted descriptions which only just fail to rule out closely similar related species, will, however, continue to be mentioned in the species comments in the BBRC reports, and in a new feature that will appear on an annual basis in *British Birds*.

ZEISS

The British Birds Rarities Committee is sponsored by Carl Zeiss Ltd.
Chairman: Colin Bradshaw, 9 Tynemouth Place, Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear NE30 4BJ
Secretary: M. J. Rogers, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ

Reviews

BIRDS OF SEYCHELLES

By Adrian Skerrett, Ian Bullock & Tony Disley. Christopher Helm, A & C Black, London, 2001. 320 pages; 53 colour plates; maps. ISBN 0-7136-3973-3. Paperback, £25.00.

The one hundred or so islands of the Seychelles, totalling only 455 square kilometres of land, and scattered over 1.37 million square kilometres of the Indian Ocean, have long been of interest to ornithologists and birders alike for their endemic landbirds, important seabird colonies and, especially in recent years, the wide range of migrants and vagrants occurring there. This is an excellent field guide, very well presented and incorporating the wealth of new information which has been obtained since the last guide dedicated specifically to Seychelles birds appeared, in the mid-1970s. Some 250 species are described in total, including 26 endemic landbird species or subspecies, 41 non-endemic breeders (including 18 seabirds) and about 150 migrants or vagrants. All of these are described in detail, with colour plates of a very high standard. A feature which will be particularly helpful to visiting birders is that many migrant species which have not yet been recorded, but are thought likely to occur, are also described, and in many cases illustrated. With migrants potentially arriving in Seychelles from three continents, it is important to be aware of all the possibilities, and the text draws the reader's attention specifically to potential confusion species. For example, one should by no means assume that a cuckoo *Cuculus*, snipe *Gallinago* or 'Squacco-type' heron *Ardeola* seen in Seychelles is going to be the one familiar to European birders. With this book, it should be possible to identify any bird encountered during a trip to the islands.

This book, however, is far more than just a field guide in the narrow sense of an identification manual. There is a huge amount of additional information, with sections dealing with the islands' geological history and climate and the origins of the breeding birds; all the islands except the smallest rocks are described, with useful maps to put the islands in their geographical context. All breeding species have sections of text summarising their breeding biology and conservation status. The best birdwatching sites are listed and described, and there is a complete check-list. An incredibly comprehensive bibliography runs to seven pages, and all birdwatchers 'on the front line' who have contributed records or information to date (about 160 of them) are acknowledged individually. Even the six species which are known to have become extinct in Seychelles since 1770 are illustrated.

My only slight criticisms are that the typeface is a little faint, and that an indication of scale on the maps would have been helpful to those not familiar with the vast distances involved. These, however, are insignificant quibbles. The excellent identification sections and the huge amount of information make the book's price a very reasonable one for anybody birdwatching in Seychelles, or simply interested in the birds of this fascinating region. Highly recommended.

Jobu Phillips

THE BIRDS OF NORTH AMERICA

Filmed by Paul Doherty, narrated by Bill Oddie. Bird Images Video Guides, Sherburn in Elmet, 2001. Double video set; running time 3 hours 45 minutes; 467 species covered. £24.95.

The camera work of Paul Doherty coupled with the narrative skills of Bill Oddie continues to work well on video. This time the pair has gone for a major *tour de force*, and launched a double cassette encompassing 467 species found in North America. Paul Doherty has travelled the length and breadth of the continent, and has captured some beautiful images of species that most of us will never see.

So, is this a comprehensive A-Z of North American birds, showing every plumage, backed up by identification tips, comparisons with similar species, songs and diagnostic calls? The answer is no. To be fair, it does not purport to be an in-depth treatment, despite the blockbuster title. Most species are allotted just 20-30 seconds, so that, typically, only one or two individuals are illustrated, coupled with a succinct word portrait comprising key points rather than wide-ranging discussion. Think of the video as a potpourri of moving postcards, and you get an accurate picture of its contents. At times, I did feel a tinge of frustration at the brevity of both clips and commentary. Furthermore, I did wonder why many species common to both North America and Europe were included. The seabirds, for example, contain only Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis*, Northern Gannet *Morus bassanus*, and Sooty *Puffinus griseus* and Manx Shearwaters *P. puffinus*, with not a single 'North American' tubenose, nor any west-coast seabirds (a few alcids apart). I assume that the video is aimed at a European market rather than a North American one, and that birdwatchers will use the tapes

to prepare for a North American trip, or as reference material for American species encountered on this side of the Atlantic. Autumn vagrant-hunters in Britain and Ireland will not, however, find any 'confusing fall plumages' depicted among the parulid warblers (nearly all are spring males), and when it comes to instructive shots of Yellow-billed *Coccyzus americanus* or Black-billed Cuckoos *C. erythrophthalmus*... forget it, no cuckoos are included.

I was also disappointed that voice is largely ignored. Seeing footage of Wood Thrush *Hylocichla mustelina*, Veery *Catharus fuscescens* and Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapillus* without hearing their evocative songs is like watching film of a Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* without being told anything about its voice. Vocal comparisons are, however, presented well for crows (Corvidae) and meadowlarks *Sturnella*. A distribution summary is slavishly announced with each species, when a range map would have saved precious commentary time and done the job more effectively.

Commentary and picture part company in a few places, as, for example, when Bill characterises a particularly glum-faced female King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* as having a 'happier' facial expression than Common Eider *S. mollissima*. In essence, female King Eiders look as though they have a broken nose, but, more importantly, observers should concentrate on that blackish nail, very different from the lime-coloured nail of Common.

Future editions would benefit from the inclusion of Purple Finch *Carpodacus purpureus*, Evening Grosbeak *Coccothraustes vespertinus*, a lot more sparrows (Emberizinae) and a complete set of eastern *Empidonax* flycatchers. Often hailed as nightmarishly difficult, these last are quite straightforward, in spring and summer at least, if voice, habitat and range are taken into account. In fact, just like the video, with a little more thought and attention they may become really enjoyable.

Anthony McGeehan

VOICES OF AMAZONIAN BIRDS

Vols. 1 to 3. By Thomas S. Schulenberg, Curtis A. Marantz & Peter H. English. 3 CDs.

VOICES OF ANDEAN BIRDS

Vols. 1 and 2. By Thomas S. Schulenberg. 2 CDs.

Library of Natural Sounds, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, Ithaca, 2000. Discs US$14.95 each.

Remarkably, these five compact discs incorporate the vocalisations of 495 Neotropical species, nearly one-sixth of the entire South American list! For many species more than one vocalisation is given, these usually including the typical song and the most frequently heard call. The quality of the recordings is generally excellent, as might be expected from a compilation put together from LNS's vast collection. No announcements are included on the discs, so that the listener, unless very familiar with the vocalisations of Neotropical birds, has to pay close attention to the number display on the CD player and refer constantly to the accompanying leaflet (which is well produced and gives the location where each recording was made, the name of the recordist, and occasionally some additional notes such as recent taxonomic changes).

The first three of these five discs started life as a resource produced by Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology for Conservation International's Rapid Assessment Program. At that time they were called *Birds of Lowland Southeastern Peru*, included recordings of 291 species, and could be purchased direct from Cornell, although they were not more widely distributed. The new discs, which were developed with support from The Field Museum of Chicago and are now subtitled *Birds of the Rainforest of Southern Peru and Northern Bolivia*, cover 297 species, most of which are the same recordings. Some of the species on the earlier discs have not been included this time on the Amazon discs, but do appear instead on the Andean discs. A few have been dropped altogether. Thirty new species appear on the Amazon discs, some of which are well-known widespread species, but others, such as Elusive Antpitta *Grallaria eludens*, Black-faced Cotinga *Conioptilon mcilhennyi* and Selva Cacique *Cacicus koepckeae*, are very useful additions not readily available elsewhere.

The two Andean discs, subtitled *Birds of the Hill Forest of Southern Peru and Bolivia* and *Birds of the Cloud Forest of Southern Peru and Bolivia*, respectively, include the voices of many species not readily available elsewhere, a few notable examples being Bolivian Recurvebill *Simoxenops striatus*, Gray-tailed Piha *Lipaugus subalaris*, Trilling Tapaculo *Scytalopus parvirostris* and Chestnut-belted Chat-tyrant *Ochthoeca thoracica*.

Together, the five discs provide a wonderful resource for anyone interested in Neotropical forest birds. Moreover, as so many of the species included are widely distributed in South America, they will be of considerable use well beyond the borders of Peru and Bolivia, as well as invaluable within those two superb birding countries. This excellent compilation can be thoroughly recommended.

David Fisher

Monthly Marathon

The photo of the bird in Monthly Marathon number 178 (plate 143, repeated here as plate 219) clearly shows a raptor in flight, apparently in a shallow glide. The bird is poorly lit in this side-profile image, and few plumage details are visible. Scale is notoriously difficult to judge with flying birds and, other than a foreground wire, there are no clues to aid us in an assessment of size. Nevertheless, both the bird's flight attitude and its structure offer additional clues. Its wings are held in a slight dihedral and are pressed forwards at the wrists. The relatively long, slim tail, the apparently slender body with a sleek belly and vent, and the rather broad-based wings with a proportionately long hand that narrows from the carpal to a fairly sharp wing point all suggest a species of harrier *Circus*.

Marsh Harrier *C. aeruginosus*, the largest and most ponderous of the four Western Palearctic species, is eliminated relatively easily, for that species is often structurally more reminiscent of both Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* and Black Kite *Milvus migrans* than it is of the smaller harriers. Moreover, our bird appears to have a pale vent and a prominent pale collar, other features that also rule out Marsh Harrier. The mystery bird, then, is clearly a 'ring-tail' harrier. Hen Harrier *C. cyaneus* can be readily eliminated, since its five emarginated primaries create a blunt, almost *Accipiter*-like shape to the wing tip. Now that we are certain that it is not one of those two species, the going gets decidedly tougher. Our bird has a very sharp wing tip, with the longest three emarginated primaries being particularly conspicuous. Montagu's Harrier *C. pygargus* has the more pointed hand of the two remaining harriers, while Pallid Harrier *C. macrourus* typically appears fuller-bodied, slightly broader-winged and with a slightly shorter hand. Consideration of these features, when combined with what appears to be an extensive pale area on the face, might make us plump for the correct species. This Montagu's Harrier was photographed by Olaf Lessow in Spain, in August 1992.



Olaf Lessow

219. Montagu's Harrier *Circus pygargus*, Spain, August 1992.

All but one of the entrants in this round of the 'Marathon' reached the final dilemma described above. Having got thus far, the majority (82%), including all the leading contenders in this competition, gave the correct answer.

The leader board remains unchanged, therefore, with Peter Lansdown, Andy Mears and Peter Sunesen all on 13-in-a-row, followed by Jon Holt, with a sequence of 12. The winner looks like coming from this pack, but it needs two or three of them to fail, and the other one to succeed, at one of the coming hurdles.

Paul Holt



220. 'Monthly Marathon'. Photo no. 180. Twenty-eighth stage in eleventh 'Marathon' or first stage in twelfth. Identify the species. Read the rules (see page 55), then send in your answer *on a postcard* to Monthly Marathon, c/o The Banks, Mountfield, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY, *or by e-mail* to editor@britishbirds.co.uk, *to arrive by 28th September 2001*.

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Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary of unchecked reports covers late June to mid July 2001.

Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel *Pterodroma madeira/feae* 11 km south of St Mary's (Scilly), 8th July; Berry Head (Devon), 17th July; South Walney (Cumbria), 22nd July. **Great Shearwater** *Puffinus gravis* Bridges of Ross (Co. Clare), 9th July. **Wilson's Storm-petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* Bridges of Ross, 9th July; 11 km south of St Mary's, 13th July, and again 21st and 22nd July, with a second individual 14 km south of St Mary's, also 22nd July. **King Eider** *Somateria spectabilis* Female, Greenisland (Co.Antrim), to at least 22nd July. **Hooded Merganser** *Lophodytes cucullatus* Female, Kilcoole (Co. Wicklow), 22nd July. **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* Spurn (East Yorkshire), 27th June; Mona airfield (Anglesey), 4th-20th July. **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus* Ferrybridge (Dorset), 1st July; Breydon Water (Norfolk), 4th July; Minsmere (Suffolk), 22nd July. **Semi-palmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* Rye Harbour (East Sussex), 9th-11th July. **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* Kilcoole, 22nd July. **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* Lough Beg (Co. Londonderry), 12th July. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* Farne Islands (Northumberland), 8th July; Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), 21st July. **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Oare Marshes (Kent), 7th-22nd July. **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* Snettisham (Norfolk), 21st-22nd July. **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* Old Hall Marshes (Essex), 9th, 14th and 16th July. **Bonaparte's**



Ashley Fisher

221. Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel *Pterodroma madeira/feae*, 11 km south of St Mary's, Scilly, July 2001.



George Reszeter

222. Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, 11 km south of St Mary's, Scilly, July 2001.



Steve Young/Birdwatch

223. Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* Spurn, East Yorkshire, June 2001.



Mike Malpass

224. (Left) Unidentified *Acrocephalus* warbler, Filey Dams, North Yorkshire, July 2001. Some observers believe that this individual shows characters associated with Reed Warbler *A. scirpaceus* of the eastern race *fuscus*.

225. (Below) Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* Louth, Lincolnshire, June 2001.



Iain Leach

Gull *Larus philadelphia* Seaforth (Merseyside), 15th July. **Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica* Flamborough (East Yorkshire), 21st July. **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* Ness Point, Lowestoft (Suffolk), 20th July. **Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus* Meikle Loch (Northeast Scotland), 27th-29th June, and again 1st-2nd July; same, Loch of Strathbeg (Northeast Scotland), 30th June. **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* South Ronaldsay (Orkney), 8th July; Port Carlisle (Cumbria), 11th-14th July, same, Bowness-on-Solway (Cumbria), and near Annan, Solway Firth (Dumfries & Galloway), 22nd July; Tiree (Inner Hebrides), 14th July; Kelling (Norfolk), 20th July, same, Cley (Norfolk), 22nd July. **Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba* Near Scarborough (North Yorkshire), 27th June; near Wigmore (Kent), 3rd July. **Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* Kilcoole, 8th July. **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Portland (Dorset), 1st-2nd July. **Penduline Tit** *Remiz pendulinus* Titchwell (Norfolk), 28th June. **Rosy Starling** *Sturnus roseus* Haxby (North Yorkshire), 30th June; Unst (Shetland), 4th-5th July, second individual, 13th-22nd July; Fanad Head (Co. Donegal), 6th July; Derrywarragh Island, Lough Neagh (Co. Tyrone), 6th July; Bryher (Scilly), 6th-10th July; Covehithe (Suffolk), 14th July; Forfar (Angus), 16th-17th July. **Two-barred Crossbill** *Loxia leucoptera* Farne Islands (Northumberland), 8th and 10th July; Fair Isle (Shetland), 6th-9th July. **Common Crossbill** *Loxia curvirostra* Influx, mainly eastern Britain and Northern Isles, including up to 4,000 in Shetland during the first half of July.



David Tipling/Windrush

226. Common Crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*, Sumburgh, Shetland, June 2001.

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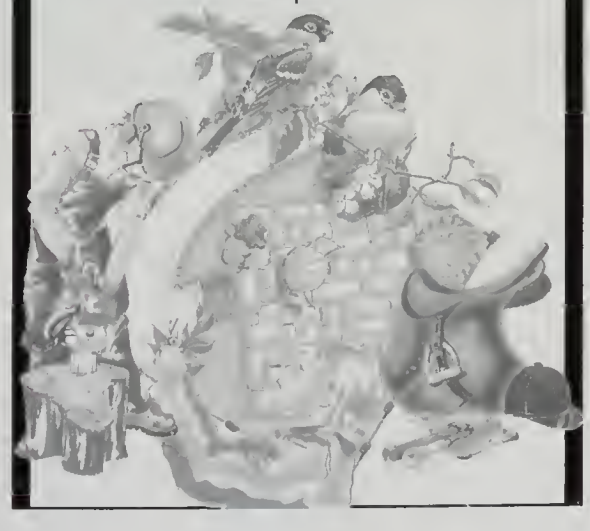
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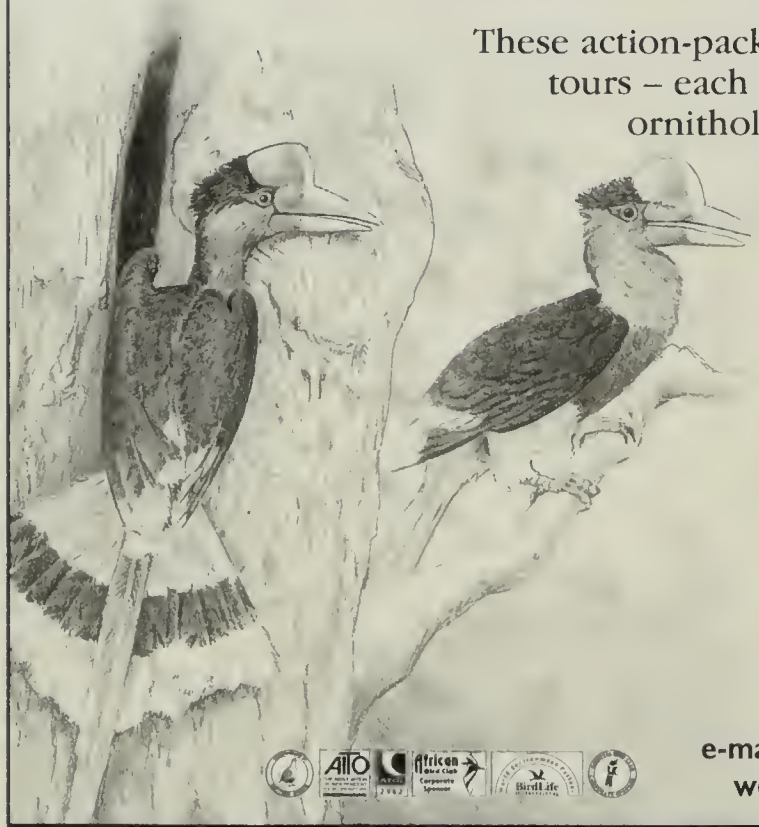
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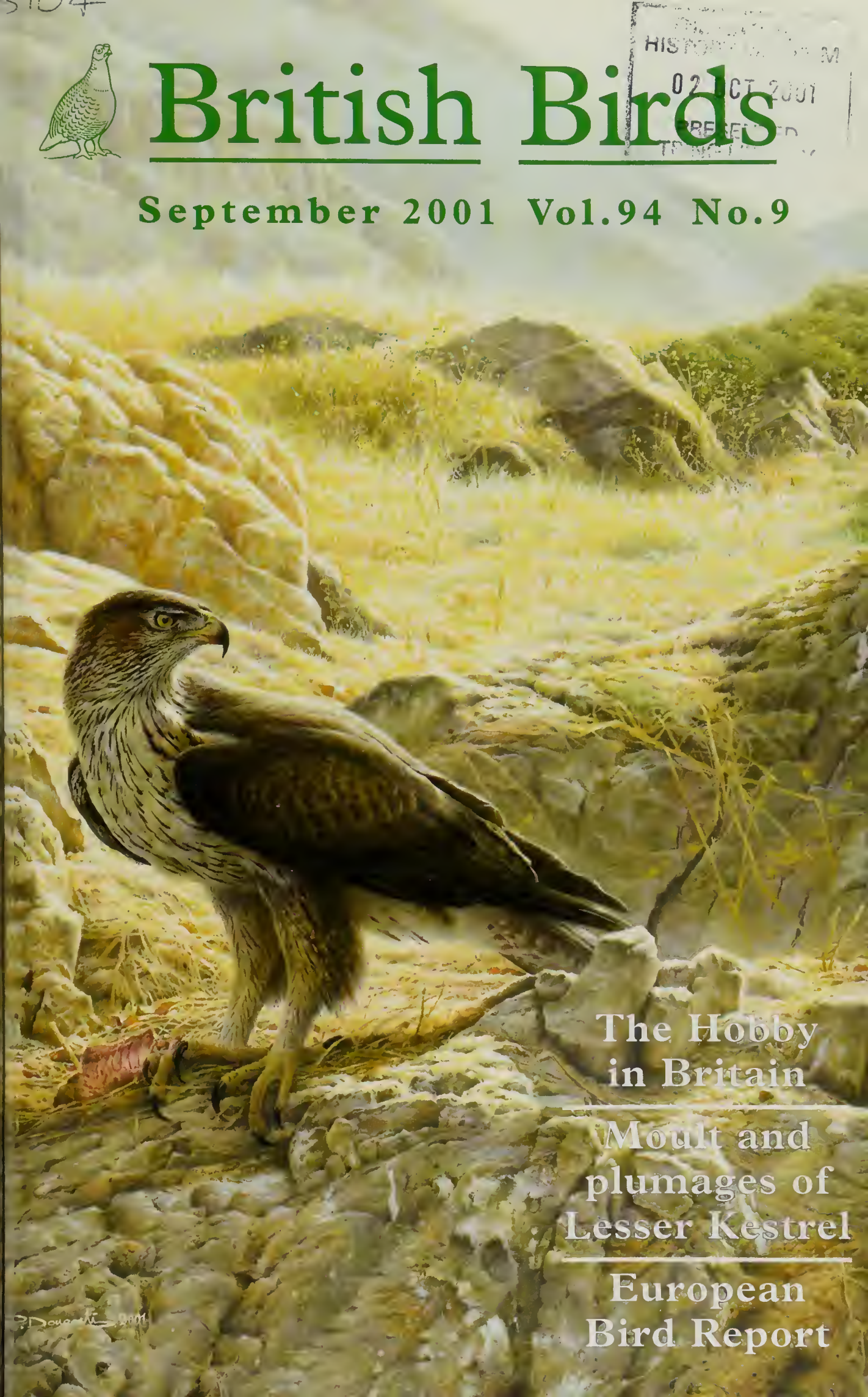
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The Hobby in Britain: a new population estimate

Rob Clements



Rosemary Watts/Powell

ABSTRACT The Hobby *Falco subbuteo* has traditionally been regarded as a localised and extremely scarce breeding bird in Britain. There is now good evidence to suggest that the population has increased significantly during the past 20 years, and that this falcon has spread north and west from its original stronghold in central southern England. Figures derived from a number of detailed studies of the species' population density, in various parts of the country, suggest that the British breeding population may be as high as 2,200 pairs.

The Hobby *Falco subbuteo* is an attractive and spectacular migrant falcon that has always aroused a great deal of interest among birdwatchers. For much of the twentieth century it was categorised as a rare to uncommon breeding bird in Britain, supposedly restricted to specialised heathland and downland habitat, with a population of up to 100 pairs (Sharrock 1976). During the past 20 years, there has been a growing realisation that the Hobby is now more widespread than was formerly believed, and that its breeding range has expanded both northwards and westwards from its stronghold in the counties of central southern England. The *New Atlas* project estimated the British population to be between 500 and 900 pairs (Gibbons *et al.* 1993), while another estimate, based on information from County Recorders, put the

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population in 1990 at 500-1,000 pairs (Parr 1994). More recently, Chapman (1999) produced an estimated figure of between 948 and 1,775 pairs.

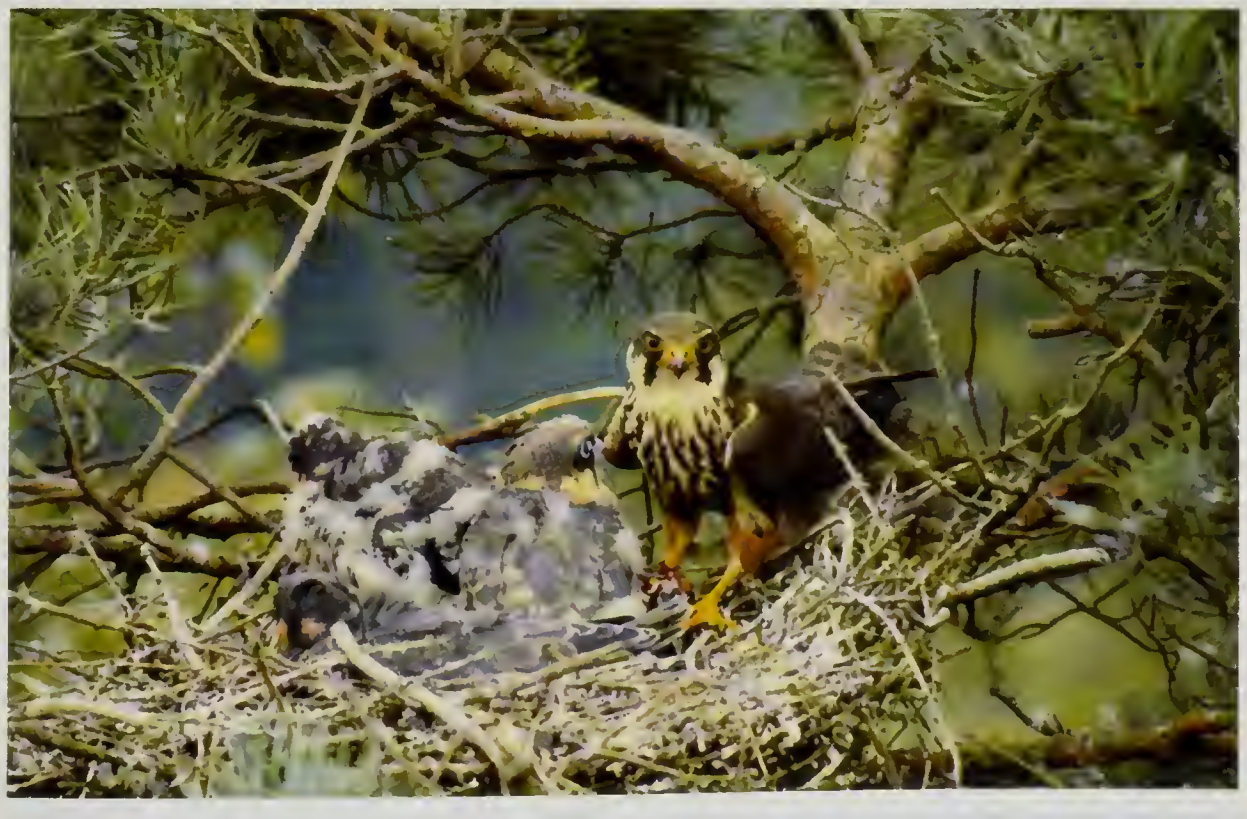
This paper summarises all the recent work on the breeding density of the Hobby in Britain, and concludes that the current population probably exceeds 2,200 pairs.

Hobby population studies

Several factors conspire against an accurate assessment of the breeding population of the Hobby in Britain. The majority of pairs nest in areas of undistinguished farmland, which are rarely visited by birdwatchers. In addition, the Hobby is often very secretive when breeding, becoming apparent only towards the end of the cycle, when the presence of noisy juveniles confirms that successful breeding has occurred. Consequently, in most counties, the number of breeding pairs of Hobbies reported each year is only a small proportion of the true figure. Most County Recorders are understandably reluctant to publish a population estimate for their region which may be largely unsupported conjecture. There is, however, a growing body of evidence to suggest that the Hobby's range has expanded considerably over the past 20 years, and that this falcon now occurs at high densities in some parts of eastern England where it was formerly very sparsely distributed.

Recent survey work in Kent has illustrated all these factors, demonstrating that the Hobby is much more widely distributed in that county than was previously suspected (Clements & Rowlands unpublished). A survey of ten hectads (10-km squares), chosen at random, provided evidence that the species breeds on farmland throughout the county, at a minimum density of 3.3-3.9 pairs per hectad. The total population for Kent was, therefore, estimated to be approximately 120-140 pairs. A separate survey, in two study areas in east Kent, found 14-16 breeding pairs in a combined area of 268 km², with nests spaced on average 3.8 km apart. Such a concentration, of between five and six pairs per hectad, occurred in an unexceptional mixture of intensive arable farmland and grassland, with some areas of well-wooded downland. The apparent extension of the Hobby's range in Kent since the 1968-72 *Atlas* (Sharrock 1976) is illustrated in fig. 1.

Since the recent survey work was carried out by observers looking specifically for Hobbies, whereas the earlier data came from a more general atlas survey, it is impossible



J. Hollis/Windrush

227. Hobby *Falco subbuteo*, southwest France, date unknown.

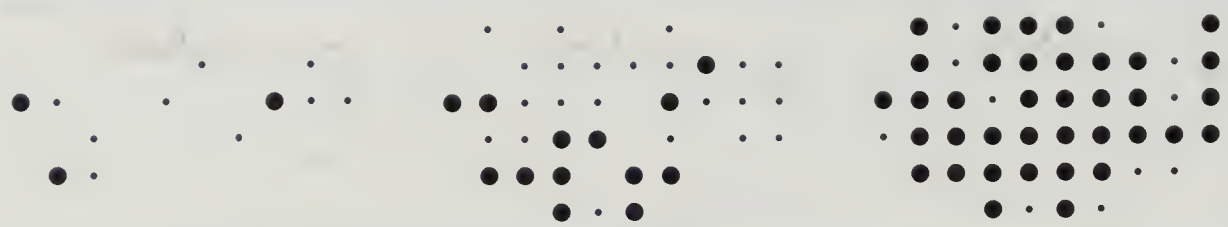


Fig. 1. Distribution of the Hobby *Falco subbuteo* in Kent in, from left to right, the three periods 1968-72, 1988-91 and 1996-99.

to be sure to what extent this apparent population surge is due to observer effort. There is, however, a great deal of evidence which points to a real increase in Hobby numbers in Kent during the past 30 years, with the species now breeding at high densities in areas where it was unrecorded only ten years ago. Similar results have been reported from Essex, another eastern county where the Hobby has spread rapidly during the past ten years (M. K. Dennis *in litt.*). It seems unlikely that this growth in numbers has levelled out, and there may quite possibly be evidence of even higher concentrations of Hobbies in the future.

A growing phenomenon in Kent is the pre-breeding congregation of Hobbies over food-rich wetland areas. The first indication of this was a record of 14 individuals hawking insects over Stodmarsh, east Kent, in early June 1992. Similar high counts were recorded in subsequent years until 1997, when 25 were present in late May. In May 2000, there were no fewer than 47 Hobbies over Stodmarsh, while a count of 37 was reported from a single site on Romney Marsh, some 32 km to the south. Clearly, although not comprised wholly of local breeding birds, these congregations reflect the increasing density of breeding Hobbies in Kent.

In continental Europe, the Hobby has been found at breeding densities of up to 7.7 pairs per hectad in northern France (Dronneau & Wassmer 1986) and, astonishingly, at up to 29 pairs per hectad in poplar *Populus* plantations in northern Italy (Bogliani & Barbieri 1994). Although survey work in Britain, summarised in table 1, has recorded lower densities, the evidence nevertheless suggests that the Hobby occurs at between three and six pairs per hectad in suitable habitat throughout its range. Surveys in Kent showed that fewer nests occur in areas of intensive arable country (Clements & Rowlands unpublished), a finding supported by the rather low numbers reported from Cambridgeshire, a county of largely unrelieved intensive arable farmland (Prince & Clarke 1993). Furthermore, in the two surveys conducted in Oxfordshire, the greater density of Hobbies, 4.8 pairs per hectad, occurred in a

Table 1. A summary of recorded breeding densities of the Hobby *Falco subbuteo* in Britain, 1954-99. Of the two farmland habitats in Oxfordshire, A was predominantly arable and B largely pasture.

Habitat	County	Period	Density (pairs/hectad)	Source
Woodland	Hampshire	1954	4.8	Humphrey (in Parr 1985)
Woodland	Hampshire	1981-82	4.9	Parr 1985
Downland	Hampshire	1954	3.5	Humphrey (in Parr 1985)
Downland	Hampshire	1981-82	1.6	Parr 1985
Farmland	Hampshire	1981-82	2.8	Parr 1985
Farmland A	Oxfordshire	1975-83	3.8	Fuller *et al.* 1985
Farmland B	Oxfordshire	1975-83	4.8	Fuller *et al.* 1985
Farmland	Cambridgeshire	1993	1.3	Prince & Clarke 1993
Farmland	N'ants/Cambs/Leics	1999	2.1	Wyllie *et al.* (unpublished)
Farmland	Derbyshire	1999	4.1	Messenger *et al.* (unpublished)
Farmland	Kent	1999	5.0-6.0	Clements & Rowlands (unpublished)

region with 55% pasture, while another study plot in an area of predominantly arable farmland (80%) supported a lower concentration of 3.8 pairs per hectad (Fuller *et al.* 1985). In Hertfordshire, Hobbies were more common in areas with parkland, horticultural crops, cattle and grassland, and less frequent in areas of wheat and potatoes (Smith *et al.* 1993). The areas of intensive, chalk-based arable farmland in northeast Hertfordshire produced few records of the species compared with the rest of the county.

The lower density of breeding Hobbies found in areas of intensive arable cultivation is to be expected. Typically, both the insect and the bird prey species upon which this falcon feeds are thinly spread in such farmland. In addition, in some areas, such as eastern Essex and around the Wash, the lack of suitable trees for nesting sites may be a prohibitive factor. In contrast, mixed farmland with areas of woodland or mature hedgerow trees, as found in the study areas in Oxfordshire, Derbyshire and Kent, offers sufficient food and nesting sites to support a higher concentration of Hobbies.

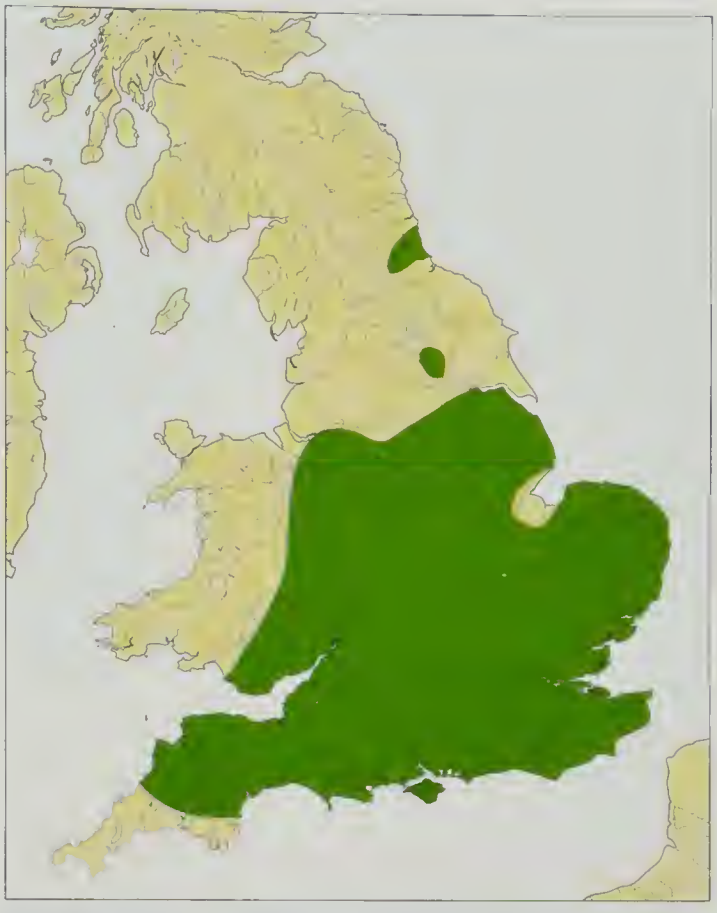


Fig. 2. Distribution of the Hobby *Falco subbuteo* in Britain, 1988-91. Based on Gibbons *et al.* (1993).

The current range of the Hobby in Britain is shown in fig. 2, which is based on the 1988-91 *New Atlas* (Gibbons *et al.* 1993). The species was recorded as present in 625 hectads during this period. As described earlier, however, the Hobby has continued to spread in eastern England, particularly in Kent, Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk. To the north, it is now breeding regularly in Northumberland (N. Rossiter *in litt.*), it has recently bred in Scotland, and it is present in fair numbers in parts of Derbyshire, Cheshire and Yorkshire. The Hobby has been present in Gwent for over 20 years, and is increasingly reported from other parts of Wales.

A population estimate

Table 2 gives estimates of the Hobby population for each of the major 100-km squares of its range in Britain. Land in the 'Good habitat' category excludes all that which is more than 300 m above sea level, as well as urban and suburban areas. All woodland, lowland heath, pasture and mixed farmland is included. An estimated density of three pairs per hectad (equivalent to 300 pairs per 100-km square) was allowed for such habitat. Since most survey workers have recorded a higher density (table 1), this is believed to be a conservative estimate. There may, however, be areas of farmland, especially in western England, where fewer Hobbies occur than are found in those study areas, so a relatively cautious figure was adopted to account for this possibility. Until surveys are carried out in counties such as Shropshire, Herefordshire and Gloucestershire, the breeding density in large parts of the Hobby's range must remain uncertain. In those parts of eastern England where intensive arable farming predominates, one pair per hectad was estimated, reflecting the lower mean population density in such habitat.

For those 100-km squares with small Hobby populations, a nominal three pairs per *occupied* hectad has been assumed (table 3). While some of the records in these areas will undoubtedly have referred to wandering non-breeders, the likely increase in



Robin Chittenden

228. Juvenile Hobby *Falco subbuteo*, Norfolk, September 1993.

numbers in many of these outlying regions over the past ten years probably renders the total of 246 pairs an underestimate. To the west of the population's core area, the presence of large areas of upland, more than 300 m above sea level, is the most important limiting factor. Consequently, in many western counties, the Hobby is restricted to linear populations on farmland along river valleys, while the higher ground is shunned. To the east, the prevalence of intensive agricultural production reduces the breeding density.

Combining the grand totals in tables 2 and 3, an estimated British breeding population of 2,264 pairs is derived. Most survey work in Britain has concentrated, however, on recording successful breeding pairs. A study in the Berlin region of Germany found that 22.5% of Hobby pairs failed to produce fledged young owing to factors such as non-breeding, predation, infertile eggs or adverse weather (Fiuczynski & Nethersole-Thompson 1980). Realistically, therefore, the total number of breeding pairs in Britain probably exceeds 2,500, and is likely to increase still further as the species spreads north and west.

Table 2. Estimated numbers of breeding pairs of the Hobby *Falco subbuteo* in Britain in the major 100-km squares of its range.
Figures for numbers in 'Good habitat' and in 'Mainly arable' assume that no Hobbies breed above 300 m, and that an average of three pairs per hectad breeds in good habitat and one pair per hectad in mainly arable areas.

OS 100-km square	Land above 300 m Area (km²)	No. pairs	Good habitat Area (km²)	No. pairs	Mainly arable Area (km²)	No. pairs	**Total no. of breeding pairs**
SJ	2,000	-	6,550	197	-	-	197
SK	1,500	-	6,000	180	1,700	17	197
TF	-	-	1,200	36	5,800	58	94
TG	-	-	1,000	30	800	8	38
SO	3,100	-	6,500	195	-	-	195
SP	-	-	9,250	278	100	1	279
TL	-	-	2,800	84	6,900	69	153
TM	-	-	1,600	48	1,900	19	67
ST	600	-	8,500	255	-	-	255
SU -	-		9,500	285	-	-	285
TQ	-	-	7,400	222	100	1	223
TR	-	-	1,100	33	200	2	35
Grand Total							**2,018**

Table 3. Population estimate of the Hobby *Falco subbuteo* in Britain: minor 100-km squares. Totals assume an average of three pairs breeding in each occupied hectad.

Minor squares	NZ	SE	TA	SS	SX	SY	SZ	SW	SN	SH	SR	**Grand Total**
No. occupied hectads	4	16	3	12	17	9	12	2	4	2	1	
Total no. of breeding pairs	**12**	**48**	**9**	**36**	**51**	**27**	**36**	**6**	**12**	**6**	**3**	**246**

Discussion

Many reasons have been put forward for the greater abundance and range expansion of the Hobby during the past 20 years. For example, improved post-fledging survival of young birds has been highlighted, with the suggestion that this is due to the increased availability of dragonflies (Odonata) associated with a greater number of gravel-pits and reservoirs (Prince & Clarke 1993). Others claim that the matching expansion of some of the commoner dragonfly species with that of the Hobby is entirely coincidental, with no proven causal link (Brownett 1998). Undoubtedly, the rising number of mature gravel-pits has resulted in a greater potential food supply in some areas. On the other hand, the considerable loss of wet pasture over the same period has had the opposite effect.

A reduction in the persecution of crows (Corvidae) has resulted in a greater availability of potential nest sites; but, equally, a larger corvid population may have increased predation on the nests of Hobbies. Persecution of the Hobby by gamekeepers and nest-robbing by egg-collectors have presumably become less important during the study period, although these may never have been significant limiting factors. An analysis of the BTO Nest Record Cards suggests that more young now fledge from Hobby nests than was the case 30 years ago (A. Chapman *in litt.*), even though a corresponding increase in clutch size was not apparent during the same period (table 4).

Climatic warming, even if only of a modest degree, might be expected to help a species on the northern edge of its range in Europe, perhaps through promoting a greater abundance of insect prey (Burton 1995). There has been speculation that a number of other potential factors might have assisted the species' spread (for example, earlier arrival dates, fluctuating hirundine numbers), or that the current increase is simply part of natural population fluctuations, but none of these possibilities can adequately explain why the Hobby population should have increased so dramatically in both Essex and Kent, and possibly several other English counties, over such a short period.

When the Rare Breeding Birds Panel was established in 1973, the Hobby, then thought to number about 100 pairs in Britain, was an obvious candidate for monitoring. Unfortunately, owing to its secretive nature and its presence on rarely visited farmland, it has since been constantly under-recorded as a breeding species. This paper demonstrates that, in fact, the Hobby is both widespread and increasing in numbers, with a current population estimated at around 2,200 pairs. In future, accurate monitoring of the species will rely on detailed surveys in specific areas of its range, rather than on random reports of breeding pairs to County Recorders. More survey work is required, especially in East

Table 4. Mean clutch sizes of Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* and number of young fledged per pair, in each decade 1970-99.
From an analysis of BTO Nest Record Cards.

Period	Clutches		Young fledged	
	No.	Mean size	No. pairs	Mean no. fledged per successful pair
1970-79	70	2.69	27	1.96
1980-89	103	2.15	107	2.05
1990-99	120	2.87	173	2.44



David Tipling/Windrush

229. Hobby *Falco subbuteo*, Kent, date unknown.

Anglia and western England, before the true status of this fascinating falcon can be determined.

Acknowledgments

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Notes on the moult and plumages of Lesser Kestrel

Andrea Corso

ABSTRACT During a study of Lesser Kestrels *Falco naumanni* at Matera, in Basilicata, southern Italy, in May-June 2000, special attention was paid to the state of moult of individuals, and details of plumage were recorded. On average, second-calendar-year females showed five or six newly moulted primaries, and second-calendar males three; adult females usually exhibited three new primaries, while adult males typically showed none (rarely, one to three). A degree of plumage variability was observed, mostly in facial pattern (all ages) and tail pattern (second-calendar-year males), but also in the underwing-covert and underpart patterns. The dark moustache varied in thickness, length and contrast, and the cheek patch was also somewhat variable. The tail varied in number/shape of bars and in the colour of the central feathers and other rectrices. The underwing-coverts of males varied from uniformly pale and unmarked to diffusely dark-spotted, as did the underparts, while females exhibited some variation in the length and thickness of the dark streaking below. Claw colour was typically pale, rarely darkish.

In recent decades, the Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* has suffered a rapid and dramatic decline in its numbers in Europe and, perhaps to a lesser extent, throughout its world range, which extends from Spain and northernmost Africa eastwards to China and Mongolia. The city of Matera, in Basilicata, southern Italy, holds one of Europe's largest breeding colonies of Lesser Kestrels (Palumbo 1997). The population is concentrated in the centre of the city, within the confines of which the falcons also roost. As many as 2,000 individuals can be observed arriving at the roost, where they then spend the night in a single large pine tree *Pinus* (Corso & Palumbo in prep.).

In May and June 2000, during a study of the age and sex ratios of Lesser Kestrels at the Matera roost, and the timing of their arrival at it, I gathered extensive data on the moult and plumages of this species. The results obtained are presented here.

Methods

Observations were carried out from 20th May to 15th June. During this period, at least three days in each week were devoted to gathering data. Lesser Kestrels were observed not only at the roost, but also in the foraging areas and at the breeding colony. The observations at the main roost were made from 18.00 to 19.30 hours local time (scientific study of other aspects at the roost continued until 21.00 hours: Corso & Palumbo in prep.). Field observation at the colony and in the foraging areas was undertaken throughout the day.

Individuals were watched at close range, and many were photographed. I also obtained extensive video-film footage of the

falcons. Details of plumage pattern and state of moult were observed by using 10 × 32 binoculars and a 20-60 × 77 telescope (used mostly at 30×). Data were gathered and written down on prepared recording sheets; each of these contained separate sections for plumage areas (head, mantle, upperwing/underwing, underparts, legs, and so on), and a sketch of an open wing with numbered primaries and secondaries.

For the purposes of assessing moult, I was able to make very close study of a total of 270 individual Lesser Kestrels. Of these, 175 were males (including 80 adults) and 95 were females (52 adults). Details of the state of moult of each were carefully recorded.

Plumage variability was recorded by close examination of 369 individual Lesser Kestrels. These comprised 230 males, of which 107 were adults, and 139 females, including 79 adults. Particular attention was paid to the facial pattern, the tail pattern and shape, and the patterns of the underwing- and upperwing-coverts and the underparts.

Moult

Among adults, the moult is always more advanced in females compared with males. For individuals in their second calendar-year, partial moult of body and tail feathers is more advanced in males, although wing moult is more advanced in females; overall, the moult of second-calendar-year kestrels is more advanced than that of adults. Details are summarised in table 1.

In 76.9% of adult females in June, some moulting/growing primaries were evident. In most cases, P2-4 were new, sometimes also with P1 or P5 growing, or P3-4 new and P2 growing; very rarely, P1-4 or P2-5 were new. In May, when numerous adult females did not show any signs of moult, 98% of second-calendar-year females did. Moreover, the moult of the latter was more advanced, with, in most cases, new P1-5 and old, worn P6-10; a few individuals had P1-6 or P2-6 new with the remaining primaries retained and worn, or had P1-4 new, P5 missing and P6-10 retained (plate 238). In June, newly moulted secondaries (S4-5 or S3-5) were evident on only a few individuals. In 86.5% of adult females, all rectrices were of the same generation (old), while only seven individuals had moulted the central pair; by contrast, 67.4% of second-calendar-year females had replaced the central tail feathers, which projected well beyond the rest.

In both May and June, adult males were in a much less advanced state of moult. In 92.5% of these there was no apparent moult in the flight feathers, which appeared to be all of the same generation. In June, two individuals had P3 and P4 newly moulted and one had P3-5 new, while on three others P4 was newly moulted and P3 was growing. Almost all adult males (97.5%) had all rectrices of the same generation; the central pair was newly moulted on the male which had replaced P3-5 and on one of the three birds with a new P4 and growing P3.

Table 1. Wing moult of Lesser Kestrels *Falco naumanni*, Basilicata, south Italy, June 2000. Primaries numbered from innermost (P1) outwards. Note that second-year females moult earlier, in May. See text.

Age and sex	Sample	% in primary moult	Remarks
Adult male	80	7.5%	Two with new P3-4, one with new P3-5, three with new P4 and growing new P3
2nd-cal-year male	95	70%	Usually new P2-4, sometimes P3-5 or P4-5; rarely, P3-5 new, P1-2 and P7-10 retained and P6 missing; very rarely, P2-4 new and P1 growing; or P2-5 new (two individuals)
Adult female	52	76.9%	Mostly new P2-4, sometimes P2-4 plus growing P1 or P5, or new P3-4 with P2 growing, and very rarely new P1-4 or P2-5.
2nd-cal-year female	43	98% (in May)	Usually new P1-5 and old and worn P6-10; in a few cases, P1-6 or P2-6 new and remaining primaries retained and worn, or P1-4 new with P5 missing and P6-10 retained



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230. Adult female Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Basilicata, Italy, May 2000. This individual shows no visible signs of moult. Note wing formula like that of Common Kestrel *F. tinnunculus*, with P10 same length as P7 or only very slightly longer; here, the tail shape is also like that of Common Kestrel (i.e. not wedge-shaped). Note typical and distinctive contrast between strikingly dark-spotted underwing-coverts and paler, minimally marked remiges; also paler cheek patch. Underpart streaking is often concentrated on breast, being very thin or absent on vent and trousers, producing visible contrast between darker breast and paler lower underparts (on Common Kestrel, streaking is normally more extensive, bolder and more even).



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231. Adult female Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Basilicata, Italy, May 2001. No wing moult. On this individual, the wing formula is more typical of the species, with P10 longer than P7.



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232. Second-calendar-year male Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Basilicata, Italy, May 2000. No wing moult evident, all remiges old; tail feathers all retained but for a single central feather; body feathers almost all replaced after partial post-juvenile moult, new adult-type feathers densely dark-spotted, much more so than in typical full adult plumage; also underwing-coverts possibly renewed, but densely spotted, appearing juvenile-like. Very interestingly, the pattern of retained juvenile tail differs from that of typical juvenile in being pale grey, not rufous or brownish, with narrow black barring.



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233. Second-calendar-year male Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Basilicata, Italy, May 2000. Plumage similar to that of individual in plate 232, but four tail feathers moulted. The central pair of rectrices (the first to be moulted) already have the white tips abraded, while fresher adjacent pair still shows a wide white tip. Primaries look very worn: on left wing, moult seems to be starting at P5. Note rufous-washed tail, with black subterminal band on adult-type feathers much broader than on juvenile feathers.

Approximately 70% of second-calendar-year males showed signs of primary moult, generally with two to four new or growing primaries: P2-4 (often), P3-5 or P4-5 new; or P3-5 new, P7-10 and P1-2 retained and P6 missing (rarely) (plate 239); or P2-4 new and P1 growing (very rarely); or P2-5 new (two individuals). Those males which were breeding appeared to have a smaller number of moulted primaries compared with non-breeding individuals. Evidence of secondary moult could be confirmed only for two second-calendar-year males (one with new S4-5, and one with S5 new and S4 growing). The central tail feathers were moulted in 62% of second-calendar-year males, and in June 21% of them had moulted at least four rectrices; only 16 second-calendar-year males (11 in May and five in June) had not moulted any tail feathers.

Moult of the upperwing-coverts can be easily observed only on second-calendar-year males, this being due to the obvious differences between juvenile and adult feathers. Many males of this age had moulted a large part of the median and lesser coverts, while others (c. 36%) retained almost all their juvenile wing-coverts. Only a few individuals (c. 14%), in late June, had moulted almost all of the coverts, retaining only some barred inner greater coverts (and tertials).

All second-calendar-year males had moulted almost all feathers of the head, mantle, rump, uppertail-coverts and underparts. It appeared, however, that males which were breeding had a more advanced partial moult, and therefore a higher percentage of new, adult-like feathers all over the body. The same moult is certainly undertaken by females, albeit later, but in their case the differences between juvenile and adult feathers are much more difficult to see in the field (Clark 1999; Forsman 1999; Corso in prep.). The only noticeable difference relates to the greater coverts and tertials, and even then only with perched birds at close range: the barring on the greater coverts and tertials is thicker, more obvious, coarser and more irregular on second-calendar-year females than on adults; in addition, the colour of the coverts is rustier and brighter on adult females, being yellower and duller on second-calendar-years (owing to feather wear).

Plumage and bare parts

Close examination of 369 individual Lesser Kestrels, comprising 139 females (79 adults) and 230 males (107 adults), revealed a certain amount of variability in plumage and in claw colour. In particular, the facial pattern, the tail pattern and shape, and the markings on the underwing- and upperwing-coverts and the underparts were studied.

Variability in facial pattern

Compared with female Common Kestrel *F. tinnunculus*, female Lesser Kestrel typically has a less well-marked and less conspicuous dark 'moustache', the dark eye-line is lacking, the head streaking is thinner and more diffuse, and the cheeks appear paler, almost whitish, showing at most only very faint grey streaking, whereas Common Kestrels have dirtier cheeks with dark streaking, often looking the same colour as the neck and nape (Corso 2000). Lesser Kestrel's pale cheeks are bordered by dark streaking on the neck sides, nape and crown, this contrast giving it a face pattern that, in the field, is reminiscent of that of a female harrier *Circus* (Corso 2000).

Male Lesser Kestrels typically have a paler, more bluish head than male Common. Moreover, the head is completely uniform, lacking the dark streaking and the dark moustache shown by Common Kestrel.

During my study, some slight variability was noted in the moustache, cheek coloration, and eye-stripe. Some females showed dirtier cheeks with some dark streaking and a more pronounced moustache; on 5% of the Matera females, the moustache was well marked and very similar to that of Common Kestrel. Only four females showed a slight blackish eye-stripe, and in every case it was narrower, shorter and less conspicuous than on typical Common Kestrels. The presence of an eye-stripe or a well-marked moustache did not seem to be age-related.

Of all male Lesser Kestrels studied, 42.5% showed some evidence of a dark moustache, and well over half of those (61%) were second-calendar-year individuals. In 76.5% of cases, the moustache was barely evident, while in the remainder the moustache was more obvious, but never so striking as that of Common Kestrel.

In addition, the throat colour of males



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234. Adult male Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Basilicata, Italy, June 2001. Note wing-tips almost reaching the tail-tip (unlike Common Kestrel *F. tinnunculus*).



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235. Adult male Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Basilicata, Italy, June 2000. Note wedge-shaped tail, although all feathers of same generation. Almost unmarked pale underwing-coverts typical of adult male.



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236. Adult male Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Basilicata, Italy, June 2001. Underwing-coverts slightly more spotted than on many adults, but still not so much as on first-adult-type birds. Note typical Lesser Kestrel wing formula.



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237. Adult male Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Basilicata, Italy, June 2000. No signs of moult. The tail does not appear wedge-shaped, but this is due to varying degrees of abrasion of the white tips of the feathers; if all were equally worn, the tail would look wedge-shaped as the central feathers are effectively longer.

was variable. Normally it is buff-white, but at Matera I found that it could be tinged ochre, or be uniformly yellowish, uniformly white, deep buff-cream, or even washed pale rufous.

Tail pattern

Although the tail pattern of female and adult Lesser Kestrels does, of course, exhibit a few subtle variations, these are not observable under field conditions.

On the other hand, the tail pattern of second-calendar-year males can vary visibly, and this feature was recorded for young males. The newly moulted central tail feathers are generally similar to those of adult males. Of all young males examined, 57.7% showed an adult-like pattern, while 42.2% had a different pattern. Of the latter, 71.2% showed grey central rectrices but, in addition to the typical black subterminal band, had two or three narrower black distal

bars, while 28.8% showed instead six or seven additional bars of variable thickness along the entire length of the central feathers. In many cases, these extra bars were limited to oval or irregularly shaped markings alongside the shaft. In 69% of those having a different pattern from that of adults, the grey central tail feathers showed a faint rusty or ochre wash.

On the majority of second-calendar-year males, the outer tail feathers were of the typical juvenile pattern, since they are retained from juvenile plumage. On some, however, the outer feathers were light grey (plate 232) with a wide black subterminal band and three to six very narrow black bars; the tail then appeared similar to that of adult males. Normally, only the central rectrices are moulted during the winter, and all other tail feathers are identical to those of juveniles. Juveniles of both sexes have a tail very similar to that of adult females, and therefore quite different from that of certain individuals observed at Matera. According to Forsman (1999), juvenile males occasionally have a grey tail, and it is not unknown for all tail feathers to be moulted in the first autumn, but no further details are given. The state of growth and wear of the rectrices of these 'odd' individuals at Matera suggested that their tail feathers were all of the same generation. My observations would appear, therefore, to confirm Forsman's statements. The only possible explanations are that some second-year males moult all of their tail feathers between winter and spring, thus acquiring a 'first-adult' tail that is only a little different from that of a full adult; or, alternatively, that some males have a greyish tail similar to adult even when they are juveniles, rather than having a tail pattern like that of females.

Tail shape

Despite earlier statements in the literature (e.g. Porter *et al.* 1981), the 'wedge-shaped' tail of Lesser Kestrel is not diagnostic. In fact, tail shape is subject to age-related, moult-related and individual variation. It can appear strongly wedge-shaped on second-calendar-year individuals as a result of the newly moulted central tail feathers, which are longer and project beyond the others, but this holds true also for second-calendar-year Common Kestrels, albeit not so strongly. On many adult Lesser Kestrels of both sexes, the tail does appear in the field to be more wedge-shaped, with a more distinct projection of the central feathers, than on Common Kestrel. Common Kestrel usually has a more rounded-looking tail; on those on which it is more wedge-shaped, the tail shows a more regular profile, without the obvious projection of the central feathers. Additionally, the tail of Lesser Kestrel appears more wedge-shaped partly as a result of its being shorter (both in absolute terms and in relation to wing length) compared with that of Common Kestrel: when spread, Lesser's tail appears more rhomboidal, less rectangular.

While the wedge-shaped tail is not, therefore, diagnostic, it can be very useful in picking out certain individuals for closer examination. After reviewing many hours of video film, I have noticed that, for all age classes, the central tail feathers project more on Lesser Kestrel than they do on Common Kestrel. This is due in part to wear, as the central feathers have a narrower white tip than the other tail feathers (plate 237) so that, once all the tips wear off, the other tail feathers look shorter than the central pair (Forsman 1999; pers. obs.); and in part to the fact that the central feathers really are longer than the other rectrices. Indeed, even though the white tips of the central pair – because they are narrower and, especially, because the central feathers are moulted first – wear off faster than do the tips of the other tail feathers, the central feathers, even after losing the tips, still look longer than the others which have retained their white tips (plates 235 & 240).

Wing formula and wing shape

Forsman (1999) mentioned the difference in wing formula between Common Kestrel and Lesser Kestrel, stating that Lesser has 'p10 distinctly longer than p7' while Common has 'p10 and p7 roughly equal in length'. Although Forsman is surely correct in this assertion, the wing formula is, in my experience, not always useful for field identification, being in many cases virtually impossible to assess with 100% certainty in the field. Furthermore, several Lesser Kestrels appear to have P10 of the same length as P7 (plate 230), or even shorter, then showing a wing



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238. Second-calendar-year female Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Basilicata, Italy, late June 2000. Note advanced wing moult, with P6-10 retained (appearing longer), P5 missing and P1-4 new (appearing shorter). Juvenile-type feathers show obvious dark tip (reported to be more typical for Common Kestrel *F. tinnunculus*).



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239. Second-calendar-year male Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Basilicata, Italy, late June 2000. This individual has P7-10 retained, P6 missing and P3-5 new. The new central tail feathers again show some dark barring, while the body feathers have a pattern almost as that of definitive full adult.



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240. Adult male Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Basilicata, Italy, June 2000. Note closed tail looking very pointed, and wedge-shaped.



Claudio Galasso

241. Adult female Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Basilicata, Italy (date unknown). Note the very obvious and contrasting pale cheek patch, whitish forecrown, lack of dark eye-stripe, pale claws, long wings and different pattern of barring on the upperparts compared with Common Kestrel *F. tinnunculus*.

formula very like that of Common Kestrel. The apparent primary length may be influeneed by differences in the degree of abrasion, or in moult stages, by individual variation or by other, unknown faetors, or simply by posture and wing position and aetion. Just compare the wing formula of Lesser Kestrel in Forsman's plates 540-541 with the identical-looking Common Kestrel in his plates 559-569; and look at the Common Kestrel showing a Lesser-like wing formula in his plates 569-570. If this character is not 100% reliable in photographs, then it should be used with extreme eare in the field.

A differenee in wing shape between the two speeies may be deteeted by an experieneed eye: Common Kestrel shows a longer, more pointed and narrower hand, while that of Lesser Kestrel usually appears shorter and more rounded. This latter impression is produced by Lesser's combination of shorter primaries and broader hand. The wing shape of Lesser Kestrel is, in faet, much more like

that of Red-footed Falcon *F. vespertinus*. Of course, the wing formula as described by Forsman (1999) and Clark (1999) also influences the wing shape.

Pattern of upperwing- and underwing-coverts

Males show some variability in these characters. The underwing-coverts can show some dark spotting, although, on most, the underwing appears uniformly white, with no or only very limited dark markings (plates 235 & 237). On a number of males, however, these dark markings can be more extensive and conspicuous (plate 236); although this is not strictly age-related, the most well-marked individuals are in many cases younger males, often in their first adult plumage. Males in transitional first-summer plumage always have more extensive and noticeable spotting on the underwing-coverts (plates 232 & 233).

Variability in upperwing-covert pattern is limited to the extent of grey. Usually only the greater secondary coverts are grey, but sometimes the tertials are as well, and rarely also the inner scapulars and outer median coverts.

Underpart pattern

Males exhibit greater variability in underpart pattern than do females. Males usually show a series of round or oval spots, which are quite sparse and limited to the flanks and belly, but this spotting can sometimes be denser and more regular, and can, in extreme cases, form longitudinal black striping on the breast and trousers and black arrowhead or anchor-shaped markings on the lower flanks and upper trousers, recalling male Common Kestrel (see photo in Corso 2000). Generally, the most well-marked individuals are immatures, and they often show underwing spotting as well. On males with little spotting (plate 242), the underparts can appear quite immaculate and very pale in the field (older adults).

On females, underpart streaking is usually very thin and sparse, more so than on female Common Kestrels, and, in contrast to the latter, the markings usually fall short of the belly and trousers and are even thinner and sparser in the centre of the lower breast. A few individuals, however, can be more heavily streaked, much as Common Kestrel.

Claws

Although these are usually very pale, ranging from white to pale pinkish or yellowish, I noted a few individuals, three males and two females, with brownish or blackish-grey claws, although never so black as those of Common Kestrel (Corso 2000). Obviously, the claws can appear dark in the field if they are stained or dirty, and this can lead to confusion if claw colour is used as the only identification character for females. Often, the claws are not white or pinkish as described in many field guides, but are in fact a pale yellowish-grey (plate 242).

Discussion

With regard to moult, the data gathered in this study reveal several slight differences from what was reported by Forsman (1999). Forsman described Lesser Kestrels in Greece in late June as having a slightly more delayed moult than the ones which I observed in Italy. In Greece, second-calendar-year females had moulted one to five primaries (usually two or three), while second-calendar-year males had moulted none to three (usually one or two). In my study, despite the earlier date by 10-15 days, second-calendar-year females had moulted five or six primaries, with only a few having moulted four or five, while second-calendar-year males had moulted two to four primaries, in most cases three. Adult females in Greece showed as many as three moulted primaries (usually two), and adult males up to two moulted primaries but usually none; among the individuals which I studied, females had moulted or were moulting two to four primaries (usually three), and males usually none but occasionally up to three.

Forsman's (1999) observations go back to 1989. From my own observations, it would seem that the climatic changes of the last decade, which have affected the timing of migration of many species (pers. obs.), may possibly have led to an earlier moult by Lesser Kestrels in response to an increase in temperature. Such a 'bold' and highly speculative theory would, of course, need to be backed up by detailed and thorough studies. If one considers that more southerly populations of raptors usually start to moult earlier than do more northerly ones (Forsman 1999; Corso in prep.), the differences between

Italy and Greece appear to be even more noticeable.

Possible changes in the timing of breeding/egg-laying in the last ten years may also have influenced the start of complete moult. It would seem that many Lesser Kestrels have arrived at the Basilicata colonies earlier in recent years (G. Palumbo, verbally) and may therefore have begun breeding earlier, this leading to an earlier start of the moult. At present, however, I do not have sufficient definite data to support this possibility, and the information that is available is not easy to assess. Since this species does not concentrate at the migration watchpoints, such as the Strait of Messina, and it does not use the typical migration flyway, it is difficult to judge its migration pattern. Nevertheless, once the falcons have arrived at the colony, a warmer temperature may stimulate them to start breeding sooner.

As a point of interest, my observations in Sicily have revealed a general difference between sedentary and migratory raptors with regard to recent changes in timing of breeding. Since about 1990, sedentary species, such as Bonelli's Eagle *Hieraaetus fasciatus*, Peregrine *F. peregrinus* and Lanner Falcons *F. biarmicus* and Golden Eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*, have on average begun to lay earlier (some pairs from as early as the end of January), whereas migratory species, such as Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*, Black Kite *Milvus migrans* and others, have laid later. This is due to the fact that, in southern Italy (and, I believe, in the southern Mediterranean in general), migration appears to be delayed in recent years, becoming progressively later each year, so that the migrants start to breed later.

By contrast, the Red-footed Falcon, a long-distance migrant which has a very similar migration to that of Lesser Kestrel (and which is, after all, the closest species in biology, structure, social behaviour and so on), has shown no significant temporal differences in recent years at the Strait of Messina, although first arrivals have been observed earlier since 1998 (as early as the last ten days of February, when the spring survey is still not underway: C. Cardelli *in litt.*; pers. obs.). As with Lesser Kestrel, however, the evidence is still difficult to interpret.

In my study in south Italy, there appeared to be a correlation between the state of moult of second-calendar-year males and reproductive activity. A great majority of those males breeding in their first spring/summer had a delayed flight-feather moult compared with the apparently non-breeding ones. Moreover, many of the breeding second-calendar-year males had a more advanced body moult (regardless of flight-feather moult status). There are two possible hypotheses to explain this. First, breeding second-calendar-year males need to have fewer moult gaps in their wings in order to fly and hunt more efficiently, allowing them to bring more prey to the nest, and, furthermore, they need to allocate their energy reserves to hunting and to feeding young rather than to moulting; non-breeding second-calendar-year males can instead save their energy for moulting. Secondly, young males with a more advanced body moult are more likely to be successful during courtship, as they have a more attractive plumage, and additionally, having finished their body moult (which takes place earlier than flight-feather moult), they can devote more energy to breeding and to feeding young. All these factors also explain in part why there are differences in the timing of moult between adults and immatures.

Finally, plumage variability has scarcely been mentioned in the literature, yet it is observable to some extent even in the field. It can sometimes also lead to difficulties in the identification of the species. This is true, in particular, with regard to tail and wing shapes, wing formula, claw colour (reported to be occasionally darkish), and the degree of streaking/spotting on the underparts. Indeed, some male Lesser Kestrels show underbody markings resembling those of Common Kestrel, something which is never illustrated or mentioned in field guides. Variability of some plumage areas, such as the underwing-coverts and the underbody, appears to be to a certain extent age-related, with second-calendar-year male and first-adult male being more patterned and showing more extensive dark markings, while adult males are paler, neater and with fewer/no dark markings. A dark eye-stripe, a feature considered always to distinguish



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242. Adult male Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Greece, late July (year unknown). Note the very sparse and inconspicuous spotting on underparts, and claws appearing dark grey.



Roberto Garavaglia

243. Second-calendar-year male Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, Greece, late July (year unknown). Note retained tertials and inner greater coverts showing dark barring. All mantle feathers have been moulted, as also have outer greater coverts (grey) and scapulars. Wing moult very advanced, with P10 retained, P9 growing, P5-8 new. Wing-tips reach dark tail band. Central tail feathers are longer than outers and, being new (fresher), show white tip.

female/juvenile Common Kestrel from Lesser Kestrel, may also be subject to some variation. Lesser can, very rarely, show a hint of a dark eye-line, but this, apart from being exceptional in occurrence, is always short and not conspicuous, never being so marked as on Common Kestrel. It appears to be, therefore, a very good character for distinguishing perched females/juveniles of these two very similar species.

Acknowledgments

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The European Bird Report

Passerines

Compiled by Colin Davies

from information supplied by National Correspondents

ABSTRACT This biannual feature, started 24 years ago (see *Brit. Birds* 70: 218), provides the only reliable, continent-wide report on population trends and significant, nationally accepted records of rarities.

Some of the highlights in this forty-ninth compilation include:

- Significant increase in numbers of **Horned Larks** *Eremophila alpestris*, **Twites** *Cardnelis flavirostris* and **Snow Buntings** *Plectrophenax nivalis* wintering on north German coast
- First **White-throated Robin** *Irania gutturalis* in Switzerland
- First **Isabelline Wheatears** *Oenanthe isabellina* in Germany and in Hungary
- First **American Robin** *Turdus migratorius* in Spain
- First breeding by **Booted Warbler** *Hippolais caligata* in Finland, where two nests in 2000, and first record of this species in Italy, in September 1999
- First breeding by **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* in the Czech Republic
- Singing male **Western Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* in Finland in June 2000, the country's first record of the species
- Unprecedented passage of **Long-tailed Tits** *Aegithalos caudatus* (more than 140,000) and **Eurasian Treecreepers** *Certhia familiaris* (6,000) at Pape, Latvia, in September-November 2000
- First three **Isabelline Shrikes** *Lanius isabellinus* in Spain
- Substantial population increase and range expansion of **Spanish Sparrows** *Passer hispaniolensis* in Spain
- First **Yellow-throated Vireo** *Vireo flavifrons* in Germany
- First records of **Arctic Redpoll** *Carduelis hornemanni* in Ireland
- First **Blue-winged Warbler** *Vermivora pinus* in Ireland
- First breeding by **Black-headed Buntings** *Emberiza melanocephala* in France

Data are supplied for the EBR by a network of National Correspondents (see page 430) appointed by each country, and are also extracted from published reports of verified records. A few entries (always marked with an asterisk) are still subject to assessment by the relevant rarities committee (and will be either confirmed or deleted in a future EBR), but all others are accepted, verified records.

While this Report covers the whole of Europe, records notified by the National Correspondents for nearby countries within the Western Palearctic are also included. This forty-ninth compilation, covering passerines, includes officially notified records from 26 countries.

This Report aims to include *all* records of:

1. Significant breeding-range expansions or contractions.
2. Major irruptions of erupting species.
3. Asiatic vagrants.
4. Nearctic species.
5. Other extralimital vagrants.
6. Major national rarities, including the first five national records, even if the species is common elsewhere in Europe.

Unless otherwise stated, all records refer to nationally accepted records of single individuals.

Bar-tailed Desert Lark *Ammomanes cincturus*

CYPRUS Second record: two at Zafer Burun (Cape Andreas) on 19th April 2000, and four there on 22nd April 2000*.

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra*

HUNGARY Third record: 20th February 1999, at Kardoskút, Fehérto (first was in 1947 and second in 1979).

Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata*

FINLAND Fourth record: Porvoo, 17th December 2000 to 17th January 2001 (*Linnut - vuosikirja 2000*: 125).

GERMANY First record: 6th July 1998 at Guenzburg/Bayern*.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*

ESTONIA First and second records: Penijõe, Läänemaa, on 18th May 1998*, and an adult at Sõrve säär, Saaremaa island, on 26th June 1998.

POLAND Vagrants: 17th April 1998 and 11th September 1998 (*Notatki Orn.* 41: 44).

Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens*

SWITZERLAND Second record: 25th April 2000, at Sant Antonino.

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata*

GERMANY Breeding decline: in Niedersachsen, where formerly a common breeder, has declined substantially; now just 80-90 pairs (less than 1% of estimated population in 1960s), and many traditional breeding areas already abandoned (*Vogelwelt* 121: 173-181).

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*

GERMANY Increase in wintering numbers: 4,760-9,225 individuals in 2000, mostly in the German Wadden Sea; following dramatic decline from 1960s onwards, due largely to reclamation, a significant increase has occurred since late 1980s, associated with increase in area of saltmarsh (Dierschke 2001, unpublished PhD thesis; see also Twite *Carduelis flavirostris* and Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*).

Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*

FRANCE Latest record ever: 31st December 2000, at Étang des Aulnes, Bouches-du-Rhône.

Crag Martin *Ptyonoprogne rupestris*

DENMARK Fourth record: Blåvandshuk, W-Jutland, on 4th May 2000* and Skagen, N-Jutland, on 5th May 2000* (presumed same).

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

FRANCE Increase in winter records: many in December 2000, throughout France.

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*

FRANCE Breeding status: 60-70 pairs in southern France in 2000.

HUNGARY First record: 18th April 1999, at Zebegény.

Cliff Swallow *Hirundo pyrrhonota*

FRANCE First record: juvenile on 30th September and 1st October 2000, at Hoëdic, Morbihan*.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

SPAIN Wintering records: four at Laxe, A Coruña, from 29th November 1997 to 26th April 1998, and up to 18 at Cabo de Gata, Almería, from 17th January to 14th March 1998 (*Ardeola* 47: 152).
SWITZERLAND Vagrant: 1st October 2000 at Lavigny (six previous records).

Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*

DENMARK Second record: 18th-26th November 1999 (*DOFT* 94: 165).
FINLAND Vagrant: 4th-8th November 1998 (*Linnut* 34: 32).

Long-billed Pipit *Anthus similis*

CYPRUS Second record: Paphos Lighthouse area, 10th March 2000 (*Cyprus Annual Report* 47: 81).

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*

CYPRUS Third record: Cape Greco tip, 19th-22nd September 2000 (*Cyprus Annual Report* 47: 81).
GERMANY Vagrants: 10th October 1997 and 16th October 1997, both on Helgoland.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

LUXEMBOURG First record of black-headed race *feldegg*: trapped and ringed at Munsbach, 1st May 2001.
SWITZERLAND Third record of Spanish race *iberiae*: 3rd May 2000, at Locarno.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola*

ARMENIA Second breeding record: Paghakn village, 26th May 2000.
FINLAND Influx and breeding record: 35 in 1998, including one breeding pair (*Linnut* 34: 32).
ICELAND Vagrant: 8th October 1998 (seven previous records; *Bliki* 22: 39).

Grey Wagtail *Motacilla cinerea*

FAROE ISLANDS Third and fourth records: 14th October 1999, on ship west of Suduroy, and 8th February 2001, at Vestmanna*.



Arie Ouwerkerk

244. Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris*, Terschelling, Netherlands, May 2000.

Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba*

FRANCE First record of race *subpersonata*: 15th May 1997 (*Ornithos* 7: 164).

Bohemian Waxwing *Bombycilla garrulus*

HUNGARY Largest influx for ten years: flocks of up to several hundred birds reported throughout the country between January and April 2001.

Siberian Accentor *Prunella montanella*

FINLAND Fifth to eighth records: 6th December 1998 to 9th February 1999 (*Linnut* 34: 33), 21st-26th October 2000, 23rd October 2000, and 30th November 2000 (*Liunut - vuosikirja 2000*: 125)

Radde's Accentor *Prunella ocularis*

ARMENIA New sites discovered: three at Mount Arkhashan on 13th September 2000, and six at Mount Gazma on 14th September 2000.

Black-throated Accentor *Prunella atrogularis*

FINLAND Fourth to sixth records: Pyhtää on 16th-17th September 2000, Pori on 1st-5th November 2000, and Hanko on 3rd-10th December 2000 (*Liunut - vuosikirja 2000*: 125).

Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris*

NETHERLANDS Third and fourth records: Den Helder, Noord-Holland, on 16th-17th April 2000* and Terschelling, Friesland, on 1st-4th May 2000*.

Rufous-tailed Scrub-robin *Cercotrichas galactotes*

GERMANY Second and third records: 1st September 1997 (*Limicola* 14: 320), and 9th-15th June 1998 at Hiddensee/Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia*

FRANCE Fourth record: Audinghen, Pas-de-Calais, 27th August to 4th September 2000*.
IRELAND Third record: first-winter, Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, 15th October 1999.

Rufous Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*

ESTONIA Correction: first record was on 18th June 1993 (*Hirundo* 12: 82), not 18th June 1996 as stated in *Brit. Birds* 93: 419.

Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*

FINLAND Second record: Oulu, 12th October 2000 (*Liuuut - vuosikirja 2000*: 125).

Siberian Blue Robin *Luscinia cyane*

SPAIN First record: first-winter trapped at Ebro delta, 18th October 2000*.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*

GERMANY Vagrants: male on 6th-7th June 1998 on Helgoland, and 2nd-6th November 1998 at Cuxhaven/Niedersachsen* (six previous records).

White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis*

SWITZERLAND First record: 25th May 2000, at Ramosch.

Moussier's Redstart *Phoenicurus moussieri*

MALTA Small influx: at least four on 9th April 2000 at Dwejra, Gozo* (eight previous records).

Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*

LATVIA Correction: record of male at Liepāja on 2nd April 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 419) should have referred to Common Stonechat *S. torquata*.

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*

CYPRUS Third record of race *maura*: 3rd-4th September 2000 (*Cyprus Annual Report* 47:88).
DENMARK Breeding status: 1998 was the best year on record, with 15-18 breeding pairs (*DOFT* 94: 136-137).
GERMANY First breeding of race *maura*: male paired with female *rubicola* in 1997 (*Limicola* 14: 320).
LATVIA Second record: male at Liepāja, 2nd April 1999.
POLAND Second record of race *maura/stejnegeri*: 31st March 1999 (*Notatki Orn.* 41: 306).

SPAIN Fourth record of race *maura/stejnegeri*: 30th-31st March 1998 (*Ardeola* 47: 153).

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*

FRANCE Vagrants: 21st-28th September 1998, and 19th-20th April 1999 (nine records since 1981; *Ornithos* 7: 165).
GERMANY First and second records: 14th-17th October 1999 and 28th September 2000*, both on Helgoland.
HUNGARY First record: 26th-27th May 2000 at Lódri-szék, southern Hungary (*Tűzok* 6: 36-39).
NETHERLANDS Second and third records: IJmuiden, Noord-Holland, on 22nd-23rd September 2000*, and Schiermonnikoog, Friesland, on 14th-25th October 2000*.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*

CYPRUS Second and third records: Cape Greco on 7th April 2000 (*Cyprus Annual Report* 47: 89), and male at Zafer Burun (Cape Andreas) on 13th April 2000*.
FRANCE Second record: 6th October 1998 (*Ornithos* 7: 165).
POLAND Fourth record: 18th September 1998 (*Notatki Orn.* 41: 46).

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*

DENMARK Third record: male of race *hispanica* at Aflandshage, Zealand, 10th-17th June 2000*.
POLAND Second record: 14th August 1998 (*Notatk Orn.* 41: 46).

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*

DENMARK Fifth and sixth records: Vejers Strand, W-Jutland, on 19th-20th November 2000*, and Gilleleje, Zealand, on 5th-6th December 2000*.
FINLAND Vagrant: 5th-9th November 1998 (eight previous records; *Limnit* 34: 34).
GERMANY Vagrants: 24th-30th October 1997, 14th-17th November 1997, and 13th December 1997 (*Limicola* 14: 320).

Finsch's Wheatear *Oenanthe finschii*

GREECE First record for Crete: male at Lassithi Plateau, 5th May 2000.

Hooded Wheatear *Oenanthe monacha*

CYPRUS Vagrant: 13th-14th April 2000 (*Cyprus Annual Report* 47: 90).



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245. Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*, IJmuiden, Netherlands, September 2000.

White-crowned Black Wheatear *Oenanthe leucopyga*

CYPRUS Fifth record: Akamas, 12th-23rd April 2000 (*Cyprus Annual Report* 47: 91).

Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*

NETHERLANDS Fourth to sixth records: males at Wapenveld, Gelderland, on 25th April 2000*, at Maasvlakte, Zuid-Holland, on 27th April 2000*, and at Blaricum, Noord-Holland, on 4th May 2000*.

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius*

FINLAND Second record: 5th April 1997 (*Linnut* 34: 34).

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*

FRANCE Third record: Ouessant, Finistère, 12th October 2000*.
IRELAND Fourth record: Garinish, West Beara, Co. Cork, 11th-12th October 1999.

Eyebrowed Thrush *Turdus obscurus*

FINLAND Third record: Pernaja, 4th November 2000 (*Linnut - vuosikirja 2000*: 126).

American Robin *Turdus migratorius*

SPAIN First record: Laukiniz, Basque Country, 10th-15th December 1999 (*Ardeola* 48: in prep.).

Cetti's Warbler *Cettia cetti*

HUNGARY Second record: trapped at Fenék-puszta, near Balaton, 23rd October 1999*.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis*

CHANNEL ISLANDS Second record: Guernsey, 1st January to 24th April 2000.
GERMANY Fourth record since 1977: 14th-23rd August 1997 (*Limicola* 14: 320).

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata*

FINLAND Breeding status: 20 singing males in 2000 (*Linnut - vuosikirja 2000*: 126-127).

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

MALTA Vagrant: 19th April 2001, at Comino (nine previous records)*.

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis*

SWITZERLAND Vagrant: 13th June 2000, at Ramosch (nine previous records).



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246. Dark-throated Thrush *Turdus ruficollis* of black-throated race *atrogularis*, Terschelling, Netherlands, April 1998 (see *Brit. Birds* 93: 420).

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides*

ARMENIA Second to fourth records: apparently breeding at Armash fishponds, with five singing individuals recorded on 23rd May and 6th and 10th June 2000.

Moustached Warbler *Acrocephalus melanopogon*

CYPRUS First record of race *mimica*: April 2000 (*Cyprus Annual Report* 47: 93).

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*

FINLAND Vagrant: 20th September 1998 (five previous records; *Linnut* 34: 35).
GERMANY Breeding: 45 pairs in 1995 and 42 pairs in 1996, most in Brandenburg and some in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (*Vogelwelt* 121: 189-205).

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*

ARMENIA Fourth to sixth records: 6-7 breeding pairs at Armash fishponds on 23rd May 2000, and presumably same birds recorded again on 6th June 2000, with nine (including first-winters) on 14th September 2000.
FRANCE Vagrants: 24th October 1999 (*Ornithos* 7: 165), 16th October 2000 at Ouessant, Finistère*, and 19th-22nd October 2000 at Sein, Finistère*.
HUNGARY Vagrants: 6th August 1998 (*Túzok* 4: 115), 7th September 1999 at Fertöújlak*, and 17th October 1999 at Izsák* (fifth to seventh records).
IRELAND Fourth record: 5th October 2000, at Garinish, West Beara, Co. Cork.
MALTA Third record: Ghadira, September 2000*.
POLAND Second record: Druzno Lake, trapped, 25th August 1999 (*Notatki Orn.* 41: 307).
SPAIN Third and fourth records: 25th January 1997, and 2nd November 1997 (*Ardeola* 47: 153).

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum*

FRANCE Vagrants and first spring record: Sein, Finistère, 23rd-25th April 2000*, same location on 15th October 2000*, and Audinghen, Pas-de-Calais, during 22nd-26th October 2000*.
GERMANY Vagrants: 30th May to 1st June 1997, 3rd-4th June 1997, 17th-28th June 1997 and 18th-25th June 1997 (seven previous records; *Limicola* 14: 320-321).

Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida*

FRANCE Vagrant: Galeria, Corse-du-Sud, 14th May 2000*.
GERMANY Third record: 29th-30th October 2000 at Berlin-Tegel/Berlin* (first since 1936).
IRELAND Fourth record: first-winter, Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, 18th September to 9th October 1999.

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata*

FINLAND First breeding: two nests with 11 young in Värtsilä, eastern Finland, in 2000 (*Linnut - vuosikirja 2000*: 127).
FRANCE Vagrant: Ouessant, Finistère, 11th-13th October 2000*.
GERMANY Third to fourth records in twentieth century: Nienhagen/Mecklenburg-Vorpommern on 22nd August 1997 (*Limicola* 14: 321), and Helgoland on 16th-18th September 1998.
ITALY First record: 4th-5th September 1999, at mouth of Serchio river, Tuscany (*Riv. Ital. Orn.* 69: 212).

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*

FAROE ISLANDS First record: Nólsoy, 18th September 1999*.
MALTA Vagrant: 1st May 2001* (11 previous records).

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*

SPAIN First record of eastern race *albistriata*: Illa de l'Aire, Menorca, 2nd April 1997 (*Ardeola* 47: 155).

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala*

GERMANY Vagrant: 22nd September to 7th October 1997 (five previous records; *Limicola* 14: 321).
HUNGARY Second record: 5th April 1998 (*Túzok* 4: 115).

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*

DENMARK Breeding status: perhaps extinct

as a breeding species, with no confirmed records in 1999 (*DOFT* 94: 69).
FRANCE Vagrants: 29th May to 3rd June 1999, and 14th-20th November 1999 (17 records since 1981; *Ornithos* 7: 165).

Lesser Whitethroat
Sylvia curruca

DENMARK First record of race *minula* or *jaxartica*: trapped at Blåvandshuk, W-Jutland, on 20th October 1992 (*DOFT* 94: 166, 171-172).

Greenish Warbler
Phylloscopus trochiloides

CZECH REPUBLIC First breeding record: pair with young in June 1998 in Krkonose Mountains, Krkonose National Park, eastern Bohemia.

Arctic Warbler
Phylloscopus borealis

GERMANY Vagrant: 19th August 1997 (*Limicola* 14: 322).

Pallas's Leaf Warbler
Phylloscopus proregulus

CZECH REPUBLIC Third and fourth records: near Prague on 21st October 2000*, and Melnik, central Bohemia, on 1st November 2000*.
HUNGARY Second record: 5th October 2000, at Kaszony hill*.
LATVIA Vagrants: three trapped at Pape, on 8th and 28th October and 2nd November 2000.

Yellow-browed Warbler
Phylloscopus inornatus

CYPRUS Vagrant: 25th March 2000 (seven previous records; *Cyprus Annual Report* 47: 98).
HUNGARY Third record: 1st October 2000, near Ócsa (*Tiizok* 6: 34-35).
SPAIN Vagrant: 16th November 1998 (*Ardeola* 47: 155).

Hume's Warbler
Phylloscopus humei

DENMARK Vagrants: Mandø, S-Jutland, on 15th-16th October 2000*, and Nyeng, W-Jutland, on 17th October 2000* (eight previous records).
FINLAND Best year on record: five in autumn 2000 (16 previous records; *Linnut - vuosikirja 2000*: 127).
GERMANY Fifth record: 7th November 1998, on Helgoland.

Radde's Warbler
Phylloscopus schwarzi

DENMARK Vagrants: two in October 1999 (14 previous records; *DOFT* 94: 166-167).
FINLAND Vagrant: 10th-11th October 1998 (nine previous records; *Linnut* 34: 37).
FRANCE Vagrants: 14th October 1999 and 27th-28th October 1999 (eight records since 1981; *Ornithos* 7: 166).
HUNGARY First record: 7th October 2000, at Kaszony hill*.
POLAND Second record: Darlowko, Baltic coast, 7th October 1999 (*Notatki Orn.* 41: 308).

Dusky Warbler
Phylloscopus fuscatus

CHANNEL ISLANDS First Jersey record: 20th-21st November 1999 (*Jersey Bird Rep.* 1999).
ESTONIA Correction: fourth record was on 30th October 1995 (*Hirundo* 12: 85), not 30th October 1990 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 423).
FRANCE Vagrants: Ouessant, Finistère, on 12th October 2000*, another at same locality on 16th October 2000*, and Audinghen, Pas-de-Calais, on 14th-19th October 2000*.
GERMANY Vagrants, including first spring records: 1st May 1997, 13th May 1997 and 2nd November 1997 (*Limicola* 14: 323).

Western Bonelli's Warbler
Phylloscopus bonelli

FINLAND First record: singing male in Hanko, southwest Finland, 17th-25th June 2000 (*Linnut - vuosikirja 2000*: 126-127).

Eastern Bonelli's Warbler
Phylloscopus orientalis

FRANCE First record: juvenile trapped at Arles, Bouches-du-Rhône, 16th September 2000*.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet
Regulus calendula

ICELAND Second record: 10th-11th October 1998 (*Bliki* 22: 42).

Firecrest *Regulus ignicapillus*

FINLAND Vagrant: 21st April 1998 (12 previous records; *Linnut* 34: 37).

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

FRANCE Influx and first record of race *albicilla*: at least 20 during October 2000, including one of eastern race *albicilla* ('Taiga Flycatcher') at Sein, Finistère, on 5th October 2000*.

Semi-collared Flycatcher *Ficedula semitorquata*

MALTA Vagrant: 12th April 2001, at Salina* (14 previous records).

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

CHANNEL ISLANDS Recolonised Alderney in September 1997 (previously absent since 1984), with about 12 individuals in 2000.
LATVIA Unprecedented irruption: more than 140,000 passed through Pape between 14th September and 10th November 2000, including 22,000 during peak of 1st-2nd October.

Marsh Tit *Parus palustris*

FINLAND Vagrant: 6th September 1998 (about 16 previous records; *Linnut* 34: 37).

Azure Tit *Parus cyanus*

UKRAINE First breeding: two pairs successfully reared young near Svalovichi, May 2001.

Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris*

CHANNEL ISLANDS Fifth record: Guernsey, trapped, 16th October 1999 (*Trans. Soc. Guern.* 1999).
LATVIA Largest invasion ever: about 6,000 passed through Pape between 2nd September and 12th November 2000, including 1,600 trapped and ringed, one of which controlled in Gotland, Sweden, two days later.

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*

FRANCE First record: Hoëdic, Morbihan, 24th October 2000*.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*

FRANCE Vagrants: 17th October 1999, and 23rd-27th October 1999 (*Ornithos* 7: 168).
GERMANY Vagrant: adult at Nienhagen/Niedersachsen, 16th-21st November 2000 (seven previous records).
LATVIA Second record: adult male of race *speculigerus* at Pape, 25th September 2000.
NETHERLANDS First record of race *phoenicuroides*: adult, Vlieland, Friesland, 1st October 2000*; same individual at Texel, Noord-Holland, 2nd-6th October 2000*.
POLAND Fourth record: female at Sielec, 23rd May 1999 (*Notatki Orn.* 41: 310).
SPAIN First to third records: Salobrar de Campos, Mallorca, 9th September 1994, Estaca de Bares, A Coruña, 12th-16th September 1997, and Roquetas de Mar, Almería, 10th-12th November 1999 (*Ardeola* 47: 156; 48: in prep.).

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*

AUSTRIA Breeding status: on verge of extinction, with only one pair in 1999 and 2000 in Lake Neusiedl area.
GERMANY Vagrants: 16th May 1997 and 28th May 1998 (six previous records since 1977; *Limicola* 14: 323).

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

AUSTRIA Breeding census: 32-34 pairs in 2000, confined to north of Lower Austria.
HUNGARY First breeding: pair with four recently fledged juveniles at Újkér, western Hungary, 3rd-13th June 2000.

Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis*

CYPRUS Second record of race *elegans* and third record of race *pallidirostris*: individual of race *elegans*, Larnaca sewage works, 26th February 2000*; adult *pallidirostris*, Paphos Lighthouse, 7th December 2000 to at least end of year (*Cyprus Annual Report* 47: 103).
DENMARK Fourth record: Hasle, Bornholm, 6th-14th October 2000*.

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

GERMANY Breeding census: 15 pairs, all in Baden-Württemberg, in 1996 (*Vogelwelt* 121: 189-205).
SPAIN Second record of eastern race *niloticus*: Columbretes islands, Castellón, 21st-23rd April 1995 (*Ardeola* 47: 156).

Yellow-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax graculus*

ARMENIA Vagrants: flock of about 70 at

Garni, 22nd December 2000 (first record for more than five years).

Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*

GERMANY First and second records since 1977: 9th March 1997, and 10th May 1997 (*Limicola* 14: 323).

House Crow *Corvus splendens*

FRANCE First record: Roubaix, Nord, 10th January 2000*, origin unknown.

Rook *Corvus frugilegus*

GERMANY Breeding population: 53,000-58,000 breeding pairs (*Vogelwelt* 121: 189-205).

Carrion Crow *Corvus corone*

MALTA Vagrant of race *cornix*: Cirkewwa, 6th April 2001*.

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus*

SWITZERLAND Vagrant: 8th June 2000, at Santa Maria Val Müstair.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*

ARMENIA Highest recorded count: approximately 150 at Armash fishponds, 29th December 2000.

NETHERLANDS Second record: male at Camperduin, Noord-Holland, 13th May 2000*.

SLOVENIA Breeding: two males nest-building at two locations in 1999 (*Acrocephalus* 21: 161-164).

SPAIN Increase: substantial population increase and range expansion apparent in recent years (*Quercus* 175: 10-14).

Pale Rock Sparrow *Carpospiza brachydactyla*

ARMENIA Increase: expansion of breeding range over western part of country, south to Meghri region, with noticeable increase in population density.

CYPRUS Fifth and sixth records: 15 at Khlorakas on 28th April (11 at nearby Paphos Lighthouse on same day presumed to be from same flock), and 13 at Cape Greco on 28th April (*Cyprus Annual Report* 47: 106).

Yellow-throated Vireo *Vireo flavifrons*

GERMANY First record: 18th September 1998, on Helgoland.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*

POLAND First record: trapped at Darlowko, Baltic coast, 17th October 2000*.

Red-fronted Serin *Serinus pusillus*

CYPRUS Fifth record: two at Karakum, north Cyprus, 9th February 2000*.

Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*

ICELAND Second and third records: 25th April to 12th May 1998, and 5th-18th May 1998 (*Bliki* 22: 43).

Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*

GERMANY Increase in wintering numbers: recent significant increase, with 22,000-45,500 in 2000, of which 15,000-22,000 in the German Wadden Sea, after long-term decline in wintering population there (Dierschke 2001, unpublished PhD thesis; see also Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris* and Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*); 300 at Hannover/Niedersachsen on 8th January 1997 was the biggest inland flock in western Germany since 1980s (*Vogelkdl. Ber. Niedersachsen* 31: 87-103).

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni*

IRELAND First and second records: Dursey Island, Co. Cork, 4th-10th October 1999, and Tory Island, Co. Donegal, 20th-24th September 2000.

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus*

FRANCE Vagrant: Camargue, Bouches-du-Rhône, 11th November 2000* (five previous records).

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

GERMANY Breeding population: 750-950 breeding pairs in 1996, of which 600-800 in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (*Vogelwelt* 121: 189-205).

SPAIN Vagrants in Balearics: 28th April 1996, 25th September 1997 and 17th September 1998 (*Ardeola* 46: 145; 47: 156).

Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator*

UKRAINE Possible first breeding: following an invasion in the west of Ukraine, a pair with three young was seen on 12th and 13th June 2001 in Shatsk National Park.

Long-tailed Rosefinch *Uragus sibiricus*

FRANCE Presumed escape: female at Saint-Georges-de-Reneins, Rhône, on 15th-17th July 2000*.

Hawfinch *Coccothraustes coccothraustes*

CHANNEL ISLANDS Vagrants: five on Jersey in October-November 2000.
ICELAND Fourth and fifth records: 14th May 1998, and one found dead on about 22nd June 1998 (*Bliki* 22: 44).

Blue-winged Warbler *Vermivora pinus*

IRELAND First record: first-year male, Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork, 4th-10th October 2000*.

Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*

FRANCE Third record: Ouessant, Finistère, between 19th October and 2nd November 2000*.

Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea*

FRANCE First record: juvenile at Ouessant, Finistère, on 12th-19th October 2000*.

Snow Bunting *Plectrophenax nivalis*

GERMANY Increase in wintering numbers: recent signs of significant increase, with 7,000-21,000 in 2000, of which 6,000-10,000 in the German Wadden Sea and 1,000-10,000 on Baltic coast, following earlier decline in wintering population (Dierschke 2001, unpublished PhD thesis; see also Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris* and Twite *Carduelis flavirostris*).

Black-faced Bunting *Emberiza spodocephala*

GREAT BRITAIN Second record: 24th October 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 563).

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos*

FINLAND Vagrant: 12th-13th November 2000 (seven previous records).
FRANCE Vagrants: 18th-27th February 1999 and 11th November 1999 (*Ornithos* 7: 169).
GERMANY Vagrant: 6th February 1997 (*Limicola* 14: 326).

Cirl Bunting *Emberiza cirlus*

CHANNEL ISLANDS Population decline: severe decline on Jersey, with just one pair in 2000 (cf. 20 singing males in 1992).
DENMARK First record: female trapped at Blåvandshuk, W-Jutland, 10th June 1995 (*DOFT* 94:167).
GERMANY Breeding population: 130-150 pairs in 1995 and 1996, of which 90 in Rheinland-Pfalz (*Vogelwelt* 121: 189-205).

Rock Bunting *Emberiza cia*

GERMANY Vagrants: 30th June 1997 and 28th July 1997 (four previous records since 1977; *Limicola* 14: 326).

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*

SPAIN Vagrants: 8th March 1997 (*Ardeola* 46: 146), 1st-8th March 1998, 13th April 1998 and 10th October 1998 (*Ardeola* 47: 156).
SWITZERLAND Vagrant: 17th April 2000, at Lausanne (12 previous records).

Red-headed Bunting *Emberiza bruniceps*

SPAIN Origin unknown: 20th October 1996 (*Ardeola* 46: 146).

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*

CHANNEL ISLANDS Second record: first-summer male on Guernsey, 21st-23rd June 2000.
FINLAND Vagrant: 11th June 1998 (ten previous records; *Limnit* 34: 38).
FRANCE First breeding: at least one pair with three young at Cipières, Alpes-Maritimes, in June and July 2000; one pair probably bred also in adjacent Var département.
GERMANY Vagrant: 1st June 1997 (*Limicola* 14: 326).
SPAIN Vagrants: 5th May 1996, 27th May 1997 and 11th May 1998 (*Ardeola* 47: 156).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*

IRELAND Vagrant: female, Great Blasket Island, Co. Kerry, 29th September 2000.

National Correspondents

Countries for which records are included in this compilation are shown in **bold**.

ANDORRA Ann Matschke. **ARMENIA Vasil Y. Ananian. AUSTRIA Hans-Martin Berg. BELARUS Dr Mikhael E. Nikiforov.** BELGIUM René-Marie Lafontaine. BULGARIA Dr Petar Iankov. CANARY ISLANDS Juan Antonio Lorenzo. **CHANNEL ISLANDS Glyn Young.** CROATIA Jelena Kralj. **CYPRUS John Sanders. CZECH REPUBLIC Prof. Karel Šťastný. DENMARK Brian Rasmussen.** EGYPT Sherif & Mindy Baha El Din. **ESTONIA Dr Vilju Lilleleht. FAROE ISLANDS Søren Sørensen. FINLAND Tom Lindroos. FRANCE Dr Philippe J. Dubois.** GEORGIA Alexander Gavashelishvili. **GERMANY Jochen Dierschke.** GIBRALTAR Charles E. Perez. **GREAT BRITAIN John Marchant. GREECE George I. Handrinos. HUNGARY Dr Gábor Magyar. ICELAND Gunnlaugur Pétursson. IRELAND Paul Milne.** ISRAEL Hadoram Shirihai. **ITALY Marco Gustin. LATVIA Dr Jānis Baumanis.** LITHUANIA Dr Petras Kurlavicius. **LUXEMBOURG Tom Conzemius.** MACEDONIA Branko Micevski. **MALTA Joe Sultana.** MONTENEGRO Dr Vojislav F. Vasić. MOROCCO Dr Michel Thévenot. **NETHERLANDS Drs. Arnoud B. van den Berg.** NORWAY Bjoern Ove Hoeyland. **POLAND Dr Tadeusz Stawarczyk.** PORTUGAL (including Azores and Madeira) Dr João Carlos Farinha. ROMANIA Jozsef Szabo. SERBIA (As Montenegro). SLOVAK REPUBLIC RNDr Dusan Karaska. **SLOVENIA Iztok Geister. SPAIN Dr Eduardo de Juana.** SWEDEN Tommy Tyrberg. **SWITZERLAND Dr Bernard Volet.** TUNISIA Thierry Gaultier. **UKRAINE Dr Igor Gorbań.**

Monthly Marathon



247. 'Monthly Marathon'. Photo no. 181. Twenty-ninth stage in eleventh 'Marathon' or first stage in twelfth. Identify the species. Read the rules (see page 55), then send in your answer *on a postcard* to Monthly Marathon, c/o The Banks, Mountfield, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY, *or by e-mail* to editor@britishbirds.co.uk, *to arrive by 30th October 2001.*

The solution to the twenty-seventh stage in the current 'Marathon', photo no. 179, will appear in the October issue of *British Birds*. This new schedule means that the solution to each photo will be revealed three, rather than two, months after it first appears. This will allow overseas readers, who may receive their copy by surface mail, a better chance to compete on even terms with our British-based readers.

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Conservation research news

Compiled by Lennox Campbell

Research and action to help farmland birds

Declining populations of many bird species breeding on lowland farmland, demonstrated by the Common Birds Census (CBC), have highlighted the impact of modern agricultural practices on British wildlife. The evidence both from CBC results and from intensive research on some of the species involved has convinced the UK government that this is an issue which it must address. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA, formerly MAFF) is committed to reversing the downward trends in farmland bird populations by the year 2020. To achieve this aim, practical advice on how to improve farmland habitats for birds is needed, and it is fortunate that there is now an increasing body of relevant research on which to base such advice.

A timely example concerns the recent publication of the proceedings of a workshop, held in 1999, on the ecology and conservation of Sky Larks *Alauda arvensis*. Edited by Paul Donald and Juliet Vickery, this contains 18 papers on Sky Lark research in Britain, Europe and New Zealand. Among a series of contributions on habitat selection in the breeding season, reproduction and survival, and the conservation of Sky Larks in general, those on habitat use and ecology in winter are particularly relevant for government action.

Using data gathered throughout the UK and published in the *Atlas of Wintering Birds in Britain and Ireland* (Lack 1986), Simon Gillings showed that, in winter, Sky Larks strongly favour lowland farmland areas, especially those dominated by arable land. This relationship is investigated in more detail in two further papers from the workshop and another recently published study. Working on 18 farms in East Anglia, Oxfordshire and Dorset, including arable, grass-dominated and mixed farms, Paul Donald and his colleagues found that Sky Larks preferred large fields and cereal stubbles (especially barley), but avoided fields enclosed by hedges or trees and those containing permanent grass or leys. Although not the main item in the diet, the leaves of broad-leaved weeds, when available, were strongly favoured. David Buckingham showed that wintering Sky Larks chose to feed in open and exposed parts of the fields, well away from trees and hedges, preferring foraging sites with short vegetation and bare ground. Rob Robinson used a combination of observations and feeding experiments to demonstrate that the preference for stubbles could be explained by the greater quantities of seeds present in such habitat, and that Sky Lark density reflected the availability of seeds on the soil surface.

Taking account of this research, and the successful trials of its Arable pilot scheme, DEFRA, as one of its first major initiatives, has introduced a new arable option into the Countryside Stewardship scheme. One of the key prescriptions will be for whole fields to be left as overwinter stubbles, to be followed by a spring-planted crop. This will provide the best possible conditions for wintering Sky Larks and, as other research has shown, for nesting in the spring.

Buckingham, D. L. 2001. Within-field habitat selection by wintering skylarks *Alauda arvensis* in southwest England. In: Donald, P. F., & Vickery, J. A. (eds.), *The ecology and conservation of skylarks* Alauda arvensis. Sandy.

Donald, P. F., Buckingham, D. L., Moorcroft, D., Muirhead, L. B., Evans, A. D., & Kirby, W. B. 2001. Habitat use and diet of skylarks *Alauda arvensis* wintering on lowland farmland in southern Britain. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 38: 536-547.

— & Vickery, J. A. (eds.) 2001. *The ecology and conservation of skylarks* Alauda arvensis. Sandy.

Gillings, S. 2001. Factors affecting the distribution of skylarks *Alauda arvensis* wintering in Britain and Ireland during the early 1980s. In: Donald, P. F., & Vickery, J. A. (eds.), *The ecology and conservation of skylarks* Alauda arvensis. Sandy.

Lack, P. 1986. *The Atlas of Wintering Birds in Britain and Ireland*. Calton.

Robinson, R. A. 2001. Feeding ecology of skylarks in winter – a possible mechanism for population decline? In: Donald, P. F., & Vickery, J. A. (eds.), *The ecology and conservation of skylarks* Alauda arvensis. Sandy.

Upland management and birds

Foot-and-mouth disease, and the threats which it poses to the livestock industry in both the short and the long term, have called into question the whole future of human communities living and working in the British uplands. Overgrazing is often cited as one of the major problems faced by wildlife in the uplands, but the loss of a viable livestock industry, while it could produce some short-term benefits, could itself be a major threat to wildlife, much of which is, to some extent, dependent on land management. Several recent papers throw further light on the complex relationships between upland management and birds.

In two papers, Dan Chamber-

lain and Des Vanhinsbergh used Breeding Bird Survey data, from upland survey squares ranging from the Pennines to Shetland, to look for habitat associations relating to Sky Larks, a species believed to be declining in the uplands, and to Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis*. This extensive survey confirmed the findings of earlier studies and showed that Sky Larks were more likely to be found in grass-dominated than in heather-dominated areas, and also in those with greater habitat diversity. Densities of Meadow Pipits were highest on unenclosed grass moor, heather and bog. The authors found that, as the amount of both heather and grass increased in the study plots, the density of pipits first increased, but then declined as a critical threshold was passed. It appears that both Sky Larks and Meadow Pipits favour areas with a variety of habitats, rather than those completely dominated by grass or heather.

Andy Tharme and his co-workers examined bird populations on heather moors in eastern Scotland and northern England, comparing moors that were managed for Red Grouse *Lagopus lagopus* with those which were not. On grouse moors, densities of breeding European Golden Plovers *Pluvialis apricaria*, Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus*, Red Grouse and Eurasian Curlews *Numenius arquata* were at least twice as high as those on unmanaged moors, but the densities of Meadow Pipit, Sky Lark, Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra* and Carrion Crow *Corvus corone* were lower. Detailed analyses suggested that predator control might be having a positive influence on grouse, golden plovers and lapwings, but that heather-burning, while beneficial for grouse and golden plovers, appeared to be detrimental to Meadow Pipits. This latter finding is confirmed by Adam Smith and his partners from the Game Conservancy Trust and Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, who found that pipit abundance declined with increasing amounts of heather and heather-burning, but rose with an increasing cover of grass.

Together, these studies demonstrate that changes in the proportion of heather- and grass-dominated moorlands in the uplands will affect breeding bird species in different ways. Increasing areas of grass are likely to favour Sky Larks and pipits, while more heather, particularly if managed for grouse, should benefit European Golden Plovers, Northern Lapwings and, of course, the Red Grouse themselves.

Chamberlain, D. E. 2001. Habitat associations and trends in reproductive performance of skylarks *Alauda arvensis* breeding in the uplands of the UK. In: Donald, P. F., & Vickery, J. A. (eds.), *The ecology and conservation of skylarks* Alauda arvensis. Sandy.

Smith, A. A., Redpath, S. M., Campbell, S. T., & Thirgood, S. J. 2001. Meadow pipits, red grouse and the habitat characteristics of managed grouse moors. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 38: 390-400.

Tharme, A. P., Green, R. E., Baines, D., Bainbridge, I. P., & O'Brien, M. 2001. The effect of management for red grouse shooting on the population density of breeding birds on heather dominated moorland. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 38: 439-457.

Vanhinsbergh, D. P., & Chamberlain, D. E. 2001. Habitat associations of breeding Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis* in the British uplands. *Bird Study* 48: 159-172.

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This feature, contributed by the RSPB's Research Department, reports the most interesting recent scientific news relevant to the conservation of Western Palearctic bird species.

Looking back

Seventy-five years ago:

'GOLDEN EAGLE AND MARSH-HARRIER IN IRELAND. The Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetus*), which was well known about the Adara Mountains, co. Donegal, for the last ten years, was caught in a trap laid beside a dead sheep to destroy foxes on April 2nd, 1926. As far as can be ascertained, this is the last remaining Irish Eagle; it was a female with atrophied ovaries past breeding.

Thirty years ago the Golden Eagle was a common species, breeding in Donegal, Clare, Mayo and Kerry. It was gradually exterminated, principally by poison.

Another Raptor which has entirely disappeared is the Marsh-Harrier (*Circus aeruginosus*), which was common on the large lakes. Although Lord Castletown strictly preserved the last pair on his estate in Queen's county, when I visited the place in May, 1908, by invitation, I only saw one solitary Harrier, and Mr. Carroll tells me he saw a single bird at the same place in 1922.

Up to ten years ago we always had one or two sent for preservation, but since that time we have never had a single specimen. W. J. Williams. (*Brit. Birds* 20: 107-108, September 1926)

Notes

Some observations on the diet of European Honey-buzzards in Britain

It is well known that a staple component in the diet of European Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* is social wasps (Vespidae), in particular their pupae and larvae, i.e. the content of wasp nests (Cramp & Simmons 1980; Gamauf 1999; Roberts *et al.* 1999). SJR's own research on the subject involves the analysis of faecal samples, collected under licence at nests throughout England and Wales. Since 1996, these samples have been analysed by staff and students at Cardiff University, and the results reveal that all seven species of colonial wasp found in Britain form part of the European Honey-buzzard's diet. The Common Wasp *Vespa vulgaris* and the Norwegian Wasp *Dolichovespula norvegica* constitute the bulk of the remains identified in the samples. In contrast, the German Wasp *V. germanica* is poorly represented in the diet, even though this species is common and widespread in Britain (Moulton 2001). The other four British vespids recorded in faecal samples are Hornet *V. crabro*, Red Wasp *V. rufa*, Cuckoo Wasp *V. austriaca* and Tree Wasp *D. sylvestris*. Preliminary findings suggest that different wasp species dominate at certain periods in the honey-buzzard's breeding cycle, and that there is also variation in the wasp species comprising the diet in different parts of Britain.

European Honey-buzzards breed successfully throughout Britain, from Scotland to southern England, and from west Wales to Kent (M. Cowlard *in litt.*; Brian Etheridge *in litt.*). The availability and abundance of certain wasp species at key periods in the honey-buzzard's breeding cycle may have a significant effect on this raptor's ability to breed successfully in regions of the north and west previously considered unsuitable (Roberts *et al.* 1999). These tentative findings require continuing research and a broader range of samples before firm conclusions may be drawn, but a clearer picture of the dietary patterns of the European Honey-buzzard would undoubtedly provide a valuable tool for habitat management and conservation.

Vertebrate prey plays a critical role in the early part of the breeding cycle, when the honey-buzzard needs to build up body-fat reserves prior to egg-laying (Kostrzewa 1998). Embryonic wasp nests are still very small at this time, and honey-buzzards would gain little nutritive value from them in return for their hunting effort. It would also prove counter-productive for the breeding birds to destroy small wasp nests in May, since the same nests will have grown considerably by July and August, when the raptors have chicks in their own nest.

Remains of the vertebrate species listed in table 1 were recorded by SJR at nests of European Honey-buzzards in Britain. Not all are necessarily prey items. In particular, it seems highly unlikely that this raptor would kill hares *Lepus*, Rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* or squirrels *Sciurus*, and none of these mammals is mentioned by Cramp & Simmons (1980) as food of this species. European Honey-buzzards have a greater predisposition to decorate their nests than do most raptors, and these three items are therefore considered to have been found as carrion and brought back to the nest as decoration, rather than as food. The condition of the Brown Hare *L. europaeus*, in particular, sug-

Table 1. Vertebrate items recorded in nests of European Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* in England and Wales, 1990-2001.
Items marked with an asterisk (*) are considered to be decorative.

Common Frog *Rana temporaria*
Common Lizard *Lacerta vivipara*
Slow Worm *Anguis fragilis*
Unidentified snake
Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*
Wood Pigeon *Columba palumbus*
Meadow Pipit *Anthus pratensis*
Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*
Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis**
Mole *Talpa europaea*
Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus**
Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus**



248 & 249. Adult male European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* at nest with chick, Wales, July 2000. The chick is approximately three weeks old. Only the male visited this nest, although the female was often in close attendance; he provided a large number of Common Frogs *Rana temporaria* to the single chick throughout the season. The alert male illustrates the long neck and small head of the adult, adapted for extricating wasp nests from cavities. *Steve Roberts*





250 & 251. Adult male European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* at nest with chick, Wales, July 2000. The nest is the same as that in plates 248 & 249, but in these photos the chick is between five and six weeks old. The male is easily identified by the uniformly pale grey head. The prey item is a live Common Frog *Rana temporaria*. *Steve Roberts*



gested that it was almost certainly dead when found. Vertebrates apparently form only a small part of the diet during the chick period, when wasps are predominant in the birds' diet. Similar results have been obtained in Austrian studies (Gamauf 1999).

Observations (carried out under licence) at one European Honey-buzzard nest, in Wales, have revealed a surprising quantity of Common Frogs *Rana temporaria* in the diet. These observations were made at regular intervals during the chick-rearing period, and any prey items brought in were identified visually. Of 39 prey items delivered to the single chick by the male parent (the female provided no food), 22 were wasp nests, while 17 were Common Frogs. Until the chick was four weeks old, the male dismembered the frogs before feeding them to the chick, and ate any remains himself, leaving no fragments in the nest. Visits to collect food samples during this period would not, therefore, have revealed any evidence of frogs in the diet, even though they clearly comprised a significant proportion. After four weeks, some remains would have been found occasionally, as the chick struggled to deal with the frog unaided. Indeed, on one occasion, after a prolonged attempt by the nestling to eat a badly injured frog, the latter leapt off the nest. The relative biomass of frog to wasp nest was not determined, but it would have been at least comparable.

Since these observations are from only one nest in a single season, they should not be taken to suggest that the Common Frog is an important item in the diet of European Honey-buzzards throughout Britain. It is important to remember, however, that prey remains gathered from nests may not give a complete picture of the diet of honey-buzzards, and visual records of prey items brought to nests may prove enlightening.

Acknowledgments

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Great Cormorants nesting on pylon

In 1998, four pairs of Great Cormorants *Phalacrocorax carbo* bred at Willington gravel pits, Derbyshire. Their nests were constructed on a pylon situated on an island in a lake approximately 8 ha in size, one of several in the area resulting from flooded disused gravel workings. There are no waterside trees at this site, and the pylon had been used for several years as a daytime roost, and also, more recently, at night.

The first nest was noted on 14th May 1998, and cormorants appeared to be incubating at all four nests by 24th May. Seven young fledged by 12th-13th August. The nests were built about one-third of the way up the pylon; two were placed where vertical, horizontal and diagonal elements crossed. All were substantial, constructed largely of sticks and branches, but they disappeared, presumably having fallen down, soon after the young fledged.

This not only constitutes the first breeding record of Great Cormorant in Derbyshire, but also appears to be the first successful breeding by this species on a pylon in Britain (B. Hughes, *in litt.*).

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Several notes regarding Great Cormorants perching on electricity pylons and cables, including the use of pylons for overnight roosting, have been published before (*Brit. Birds* 69: 498; 73: 310; 74: 181; 79: 337-338). We have, however, been unable to find any records in the literature of this species nesting on pylons elsewhere in its range.

Black-headed Gull aerial-skimming

P.A. Buckley and J. P. Hailman (*Brit. Birds* 63: 210-212) described an adult Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus* aerial-skimming in Sweden, in September 1967, and listed five species of tern *Sterna* (Caspian *S. caspia*, Royal *S. maxima*, Roseate *S. dougallii*, Common *S. hirundo* and Least *S. antillarum*) which have also been noted as using this behaviour. They concluded that 'most or all ... were probably drinking from the wing'.

On 11th September 1997, at Eling Great Marsh, Hampshire, I watched an adult Black-headed Gull aerial-skimming in pursuit of a shoal of small, unidentified fish. Running with neck outstretched through the muddy shallows at the saltmarsh edge, it took wing and, in two bouts, each of some 30 seconds' duration, skimmed the surface of the water with the tip of its lower mandible submerged. Although no fish were caught, the gull was clearly attracted by the shoal.

The incident recalled Graham Bundy's observation of a group of Slender-billed Gulls *L. genei* aerial-skimming for small fish in Saudi Arabia (*Brit. Birds* 77: 421). How widespread, I wonder, is this habit?

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Black Terns feeding on earthworms

In the afternoon of 18th June 1997, we observed a group of about 20 Black Terns *Chlidonias niger* feeding over a field of sugar beet just behind the southern embankment of the Goczalkowicki reservoir, southern Poland. The flying terns were hunting for earthworms, which were abundant on the soil surface after heavy rain during the previous day. After locating a prey item, an individual would land for a split second, without folding the wings, and catch an earthworm, which was often more than 12 cm long. The successful terns then flew directly to a breeding colony of some 40 nests, about 600 m away.

Observations of Black Terns hunting over land are very rare in the literature. The inclusion of earthworms in the diet is documented, but without details (Haverschmidt 1978; Glutz von Blotzheim & Bauer 1982; Cramp 1985). Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this observation is that the terns repeatedly brought earthworms to the colony, surely a most unusual prey item for nestlings.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Although Black Terns have previously been recorded feeding over dry land (e.g. *Brit. Birds* 62: 282; 63: 34), the repeated capture of earthworms, apparently to feed nestlings, is of interest.

Mute Swans raising young Canada Goose

Boatshed Lodge, Walkden, Greater Manchester, is a small pond, about 1.5 ha in extent, and has an island on which a pair of Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* breeds annually. The banks are fairly steep and the water is fenced off, but the wildfowl are fed regularly by the public.

On 10th April 1999, JS noted that the pair of swans which had bred in 1998 had begun to nest again on the island, with two of the six 1998 cygnets still with them. A pair of Canada Geese *Branta canadensis* was also present, and attracted intermittent hostility by the swans. Subsequently, AS was informed that three cygnets had hatched on 8th May, but that one was of a strange yellow colour. On visiting the site, she found that the brood in fact consisted of two cygnets and one Canada Goose gosling, the latter being accepted by both adult Mute Swans and the one remaining 1998 cygnet. Four unhatched goose eggs and two unhatched swan eggs were subsequently removed from the nest. According to local fishermen, the pen had been seen dragging eggs into her nest, doubtless those of the Canada Goose which had been laid close by. The adult Canada Geese were still present in May, but showed no interest in their offspring. Perhaps the presence of goose eggs so close to the pen's rudimentary nest 'switched off' her own laying mechanism?

The innate differences in feeding behaviour between the cygnets and the gosling were evident. The gosling normally jumped out on to the grass-lawn banks and grazed, whereas the cygnets depended on what the pen dredged up for them. All ate bread offered by the public. The pen and cygnets normally fed close to the banks, enabling the gosling to stay with the brood; if they moved out into open water, the gosling followed immediately.

No problems were apparent until 22nd June, by which time the gosling had developed full plumage. On this date the cob began to chase it off. Responding to public concern for its safety, we caught the young goose and removed it to a reserve about 11 km away, where there were several Canada Goose broods of the same age and a pair of sterile Mute Swans. The gosling quickly attached itself to the swans, which were indifferent to it, and it stayed with its new foster parents until at least the autumn.

Another instance in which Mute Swans were observed to foster goslings, in this case of the Greylag Goose *Anser anser*, occurred in Edinburgh in 1999 (*Scot. Birds* 21: 45). On this occasion, a female Greylag had laid eggs in a swan nest, before being evicted by the swans. Three of the brood of four goslings survived to fledging.

Judith Smith and Annie Surtees
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Common Coots feeding wet feathers to young

On 15th June 1999, at Alexandra Park Boating Lake, north London, I saw a pair of adult Common Coots *Fulica atra* feeding wet down feathers to its young, which were less than 24 hours old and still on the nest. There were plenty of down feathers floating on the water, but the parents appeared to ignore these and selected only wet feathers. I have watched Great Crested Grebes *Podiceps cristatus* feeding feathers to their young, but in all such cases the feathers have appeared to be dry ones.

Alan Gibson
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EDITORIAL COMMENT Ken Simmons has commented that Great Crested Grebes do, in fact, usually wet feathers before feeding them to their young, typically dunking them repeatedly. We have, however, been unable to find any record of Common Coots behaving in this manner.

Letters

Colour reproduction in photographs

The recent article regarding the identification of an *Acrocephalus* warbler on Unst, Shetland (*Brit. Birds* 94: 236-245), raises important issues concerning colour reproduction in photographs. In the case of two similar species, such as Blyth's Reed Warbler *A. dumetorum* and Reed Warbler *A. scirpaceus*, these colours become crucial in the assessment of photographs by rarities committees and others. It was stated in the article that the colours in the photographs did not match the colour of the bird as observed in the field. There are, however, methods by which such disparities can be reduced or eliminated.

Colour reproduction and the management of images is extremely complex, and is a science in its own right. It is also important to remember that no two people will perceive colours and tones in exactly the same way, whether in a photograph or in the field, so these issues must remain, to some extent, subjective. Colours in images can, however, be controlled and reproduced perfectly in a non-subjective way. There are several scientifically produced colour cards that can be used as targets in photographs. These cards have pure colours and grey scales. The colours on such cards always include red, green and blue (the colours used by film and digital cameras), and cyan, magenta and yellow (the colours used in printing slide film to print, or reversal process printing). The grey scale on these cards represents known increments of shade from pure white to black. By photographing one of these cards alongside your subject, it is possible to make objective evaluations of the colours in the photograph by comparing the original colour card with the one in the image. These comparisons can be made either visually or through the use of an optical density meter.

The cards should, therefore, be an important part of any ringer's field kit if he or she is likely to be catching birds that require a description. Unlike field observation, where there is no *requirement* for an observer to submit a description, any ringer who catches a species on the BBRC's list *must* submit a description, since it is important that every ring is fitted on a properly identified species. Such a colour card may enhance the photographs and remove (or at least greatly reduce) any subjectivity on the part of both the ringer and the committee.

Unfortunately, it is not quite that simple. The process of checking and correcting the colour balance in an image is not that easy to do and is something that is usually better attempted by professionals. Correction of the colour balance is best achieved digitally. It is also important that the monitor and printer used to produce the image are properly calibrated. While it is possible for a home user to achieve this, it can be a tortuous process. The inclusion of a colour card, however, does at least mean that the correction of an image *can* be achieved, if it is deemed necessary (there would be little need, for example, if the subject was a male Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope*). It also allows for electronically transmitted images to be checked, provided that the recipient has a similar card with standard colours.

One further point is that of achieving the correct exposure in these important record shots of a bird in the hand. All cameras measure the exposure of a scene from a standard of 18% grey. Thus, for the purposes of photographing a bird in the hand, it is possible to obtain the perfect exposure by setting the exposure of your camera from a card that is purely 18% grey.

I believe that it is, therefore, possible to take perfect-record shots of birds in the hand by the following method:

1. Attach a colour card and an 18% grey card side by side on another piece of card. This is the target to use for all your record shots.
2. Place this combination target out of direct light (so that there are no strong reflections or shadows on it). Set the exposure of your camera by filling the viewfinder with 18% grey. Make sure that this is done on a manual setting, so that the exposure does not change when the camera is moved.

3. Reframe the shot to include the grey card and the colour card.
4. To take the shot, hold the bird in front of the grey card only; do not hold it in front of the colour card, since the colours may reflect on to the plumage. It is important that the bird is in the same light as that used for the grey card to set your exposure.
5. Now take your shot, making sure that the exposure is still the same as it was in step 2. You have set the perfect exposure and have a known set of colours in the image.

This process should remove the problems encountered by rarities committees in determining which colours are the true ones in cases where those in written descriptions are at odds with those revealed in accompanying photographs. It even removes the doubt that digital imaging has been altered in any way (either by accident or deliberately). Ringers who adopt this method should remember that, while it is useful for record shots, additional photos taken with a pretty background will provide a more pleasing reproduction.

Ross McGregor
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EDITORIAL COMMENT David Cottridge has commented as follows: 'In principle, I think that some system which allows birdwatchers to be able to communicate more accurately about colour is a good idea, and a much-needed one. That the methods which Ross McGregor suggests can work in practice is, however, in my opinion unlikely. Despite what people may think, photography in the field is not an accurate science/art form. There is no such thing as a universally correct exposure. The 18% grey on which most 35-mm camera systems are based is a compromise to make things easier for the amateur, simply because film emulsions are unable to record the range of tones and colour hues that we are able to experience through our own eyes. Many professional wildlife-photographers (myself included) rarely rely upon the automatic exposure sytems in our camera bodies; instead, we set the camera to manual exposure and select a key tone which relates to the subject from which to take a light reading. In cases where the subject tone and the background tone are in the region of 18% grey, the grey-card system will work well; but, as either moves towards the black or the white end of the scale, inaccuracies will occur. For example, black birds against dark backgrounds will be over-exposed, and white birds against light backgrounds will be under-exposed, simply because automatic systems are seeking that 18% grey. The result on film will be a black bird that appears dark grey, or a white bird that appears light grey, and in these cases exposure compensation is therefore necessary in order to achieve black or white images of the bird on film. I have chosen two extreme examples to illustrate where the inaccuracies will be great, and they will become more subtle as the 18% grey subject against 18% grey background is approached. Since the main area of concern in this situation is with subtle tones and hues of colour, there are a large number of instances where small (but perhaps important) inaccuracies could occur.

'Mention should also be given to other factors which can have a marked effect upon the colour balance and tonal appearance of a photograph:

1. Different makes of film (e.g. Kodachrome, Fuji Sensia and Agfachrome) will give a different colour balance, and so the same bird photographed against the same background in the same light can vary noticeably in colour on different films.
2. The processing of the same film can vary at different labs, thus affecting colour balance and exposure. This may depend on whether the chemicals are fresh or not, or on how stringent the systems or operators are.
3. The process of transferring the photograph on to a plate for printing can alter the colour balance, which can be further affected during printing on the press. I have seen quite large differences in colour balance of the same image depending on whether it was at the beginning or the end of the print run.

'It is true that digital imaging is making the reproduction of photographs more uniform in

standard, but I have found that calibration of the on-screen image to the printed image is virtually impossible to achieve with complete accuracy, even though I have considerable experience of this. I can get quite close, but the differences that remain are due, I believe, to the different ways in which the colours are generated: i.e. the on-screen image uses light transmitted through a glass screen and the print is seen by means of reflected light, and so, in my opinion, these slight differences will remain.

'While Ross McGregor's suggested method of photographing birds in the hand would certainly be a great improvement on many in-the-hand pictures, the road to accurate colour reproduction by whatever method is fraught with difficulties. Certainly, the presence of a grey card in a picture is a step in the right direction, even though it will no longer be the same tone or colour as the original. It is one thing to compare a grey card in a picture with the original, but quite another matter to look at the bird next to the card and make a similar adjustment in the mind. Remember that, if the bird is a dark- or light-plumaged one, it may be slightly over- or under-exposed. In summary, I do not think that it is possible to take "perfect-record shots of birds in the hand".

'The method which I prefer would be not to rely on photographs at all. When working on the "Sylvia Project" (see Shirihai *et al.*, 2001, *Sylvia Warblers*) we used the *Methuen Handbook of Colour*, which is a book of colour charts the printing of which is carefully monitored to ensure that the colours in all copies are identical. We simply matched colours of the bird in the hand with those on the colour charts, and gave them a reference number. Also included in the book is a list of internationally accepted colour names, such as "Olive Green" or "Yellow Ochre", and their specific position in the colour charts is designated. This method of direct colour-to-colour comparison meant that there was no recorded image to change the colour balance. During communication, a colour reference was given with the description. This method does, of course, rely on everyone involved having a copy of this book, or something similar.'

The identification of an Acrocephalus *warbler*

I started into the recent discussion of the problems of Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* identification (*Brit. Birds* 94: 236-245) with some eagerness. Half-an-hour later, I had a raging biometrics-and-caveat migraine, and was fully subject to the observers' confusion and the Rarities Committee's trauma. I drank some coffee and started again, this time putting myself in the shoes of the bird's finder, at Norwick, Shetland, on 16th September 1997...

First, to me, the short 'tuc' call suggested Marsh Warbler *A. palustris*, not Blyth's Reed (I much prefer 'tack' or 'tchek' for the latter), but that lead did not survive the contrary combination of 'short' wings and 'grey' legs. The bird's apparent 'coldness' raised the possibility of Blyth's Reed, although 'noticeably plain wings' did not really amount to distinctly uniform upperparts and wings. I concentrated on the face pattern, and excitement mounted as a 'spectacled' effect was confirmed, and there was the 'bulging' fore-supercilium, beloved of modern gurus. With the addition of an habitual 'tail-cock', the case for Blyth's Reed soared. On to the underparts: their paleness was marked, but the 'buff tint' under the tail jarred a bit.

With the bird safely in the hand, two horrible things became apparent: the 'bulging supercilium' was an artefact of an incompletely feathered forecrown, while the plain wings turned out to have noticeably dark-centred tertials. Worse still, the seven or eight exposed primary tips were one or two more than any Blyth's Reed had ever shown me, while the bill looked identical to that of the accompanying Reed Warbler *A. scirpaceus*. My case for Blyth's Reed crashed and burned.

Reluctantly, I returned to the biometrics, but, apart from the rather short wing length, which ruled out Marsh Warbler and, with the hint of emargination on P4, just favoured 'Caspian' Reed Warbler *A. s. fuscus*, I ended up half-blind again. One last try with the photographs. Gosh, do I see an 'off-white fringe on the tip and distal part of inner

web' of the outer tail feather on the odd bird, a feature noted by Kees Roselaar in *BWP* for Caspian Reed? Yes, but, damn me!, the Reed shows a similar fringe...

I gave up. To me, the bird is a Reed Warbler from the far(ish) east. Need we have regarded it as unidentifiable, and devoted ten precious *BB* pages to it? The discussion of such modern artefacts in bird identification as the vagaries of film stock and the variability of electronic transmission did not leave me spellbound. Mind you, that call will need remembering. With no slur or 'z' sound in it, could it indeed belong to Caspian Reed, and not Reed Warbler?

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Never say never...

In his discussion of the purported Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* on Unst, Shetland (*Brit. Birds* 94: 291-293), Keith Vinicombe stated that Reed Warblers *A. scirpaceus* do not cock or raise their tail 'persistently over a long period of time while foraging'. But for the following experience, I would have agreed with him. On 12th October 1988, I observed a first-winter Reed Warbler at Winspit, Dorset, which I noted as holding its tail constantly cocked. When it was first discovered, foraging in Sycamores *Acer pseudoplatanus*, the fleeting views and cocked tail prompted thoughts of something unusual until, eventually, longer views and the appearance of a second first-winter Reed Warbler with tail not cocked dispelled them.

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Photographs of birds in the hand

Am I alone in finding photographs of birds in the hand unnecessary, unhelpful and, above all, unpleasant? The April and May issues of *British Birds* (Vol. 94) contained no fewer than 22 such pictures. I have no doubt that a bird gripped by the legs is terrified, while the resulting picture gives no indication whatsoever of the bird's jizz or shape, and is of use only to those whose interest in birds extends no further than minute examination of feathers. Standards of photography rise all the time (in the April issue, compare David Cottridge's magnificent shots of unfettered *Sylvia* warblers with the awful pictures of captured birds). It is high time that the bird-in-the-hand shot was dropped entirely from the pages of *BB* and similar magazines.

David Tomlinson
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EDITORIAL COMMENT Roger Riddington, the Editor of *British Birds*, has commented as follows: 'Photographs of birds held by ringers are, of course, less appealing aesthetically than are good-quality field shots. The main reason for publishing almost all of the 22 photographs referred to by David Tomlinson is, however, that good field shots of particular plumages or of certain individual birds do not exist, notwithstanding the improvement in photographic skills to which he refers. Admittedly, such photos do not demonstrate the characteristic jizz of a species; but, equally, very few field photos can capture the fineness of plumage detail possible with photographs of birds in the hand. Addressing the comment about a bird in the hand being terrified, I would point out that each of the photographs in the article by Shirihai *et al.* (*Brit. Birds* 94: 160-190) portrayed a bird with its eyes wide open, bill closed, wings still, and plumage relaxed and sleeked (and all were, I believe, absolutely first-class photographs). In my experience, birds which are anxious or stressed react in exactly the opposite way, and these

should be released as soon as possible after ringing, rather than being retained for photographs to be taken of them. Personally, I think that it is a great pity that the British have such a curiously conservative attitude towards research and fieldwork involving ringing (which is, after all, an extremely important tool of field ornithology), compared with many of our European neighbours. This is particularly strange since the British Ringing Scheme, administered by the BTO, is widely acknowledged to be one of the finest of its type in the world.'

The commercialisation of ornithology

I am indebted to *British Birds* for reopening the correspondence on the subject of bird populations and the commercialisation of ornithology (*Brit. Birds* 94: 250-251). As always, Bill Bourne has a point; it is undeniable that the RSPB and the BTO base their appeals on bad news, and that the average age of census-takers has increased. But when Bill was a mere lad, the membership of the RSPB was numbered in the low thousands. Now it is over one million, and the RSPB is better supported than any other conservation body in the world. Readers of *BB* may be cynical about the means by which this position was reached, but the end is so important and beneficial to the environment that I, for one, welcome the efforts of all the directors of RSPB and their staff from Peter Conder onwards. Indeed, we should all support the RSPB as much as we can. As it has itself become a powerful lobby for conservation, so has it acquired powerful enemies in the establishment.

Of course, at the same time as the number of birders has grown, so the age profile of census-takers has increased. It may be unwelcome news to those of us born before 1939, but today's young birders have access to cheap flights all over the world. No longer are they all working a local patch in their spare time, but they are more likely to be consolidating their world lists in Thailand or Australia. Nor, I believe, are members of the current generation such good all-round naturalists as their parents or grandparents. Nonetheless, the birding establishment, which includes the RSPB, the BTO and (dare I say it?) *BB*, will have to adapt to this situation. Although professional ornithologists will continue to study birds in depth, and the Great Tits *Parus major* of Oxfordshire will have no rest in Wytham Woods, the central focus of attention for young birders has shifted to identification. The challenge to the conservation bodies is to harness this enthusiasm.

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News and comment

Compiled by Bob Scott and Wendy Dickson

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of *British Birds*

Suffolk raptors

Founded in 1973, the Suffolk Ornithologists' Group (SOG) has recently published the results of four years of intensive surveys in the county. The report, *Survey of Breeding Raptors & Owls in Suffolk 1995-1998*, by Mick Wright, provides important and much-needed baseline data, against which future changes can be compared.

The following information comes from the report's summary. After an absence of 161 years, a single pair of Red Kites *Milvus milvus* bred successfully during the study period; there were 34 female Marsh Harriers *Circus aeruginosus* at 14 sites in 1995; there were no reports of confirmed breeding by Northern Goshawks *Accipiter gentilis*; the breeding population of Eurasian Sparrowhawks *A. nisus* is believed to be stable overall, despite some local declines, and estimated to be around 480-700 pairs; one pair of Common Buzzards *Buteo buteo* was suspected of breeding in 1998; the population of Common Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus* was estimated at 660-970 pairs; the Hobby *Falco subbuteo* is increasing as a breeding bird, but its annual numbers vary between 15 and 25 pairs; Barn Owls *Tyto alba* appear to be increasing, with 51-90 pairs, as are Little Owls *Athene noctua*, with a population of 470-670 pairs; the breeding population of Tawny Owls *Strix aluco* was estimated to be around 650 pairs; Long-eared Owls *Asio otus* are holding their own, at 10-15 pairs, while there were no breeding Short-eared Owls *A. flammeus*.

Copies of the report are available from Mick Wright, 15 Avondale Road, Ipswich IP3 9JT.

Bernard Tucker Memorial Lecture

British Birds is delighted to announce that it will, once again, be supporting the Bernard Tucker Memorial Lecture, which is organised jointly by the Oxford Ornithological Society and the Ashmolean Natural History Society. This year, the speaker will be Professor Nick Davies, who will give a talk entitled 'Cuckoo Tricks with Eggs and Chicks' on Tuesday 6th November, at the University Museum of Natural History, Parks Road, Oxford, at 8.00 p.m. Nick Davies is one of the most entertaining speakers in the country, and we wholeheartedly recommend the event to anyone able to travel to Oxford that evening. For those who cannot attend, however, we can reveal that this 2001 lecture will be published as a paper in *British Birds*. Like previous contributions by Professor Davies (for example, *BB* 80: 604-624), this is sure to be a particular highlight of next year's contents.

Suffolk birdman moves west (and then south!)

Derek Moore is a familiar and respected member of the Suffolk birding community. For 14 years he was Director of the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, and steered the Trust to the strong position which it is in today. His work in Suffolk (and elsewhere) earned him an OBE in 1998. Derek's interests are many and varied; you might equally find him chairing strange panel games at the British Birdwatching Fair or fighting for bird conservation in Cyprus. Two-and-a-half years ago, Derek moved away from his beloved Suffolk and took on the role of Director of Conservation for the Wildlife Trusts, UK office (in Newark), but now he has moved even farther west. His latest challenge is to take up the duties of Chief Executive for the Wildlife Trusts of Glamorgan and West Wales. We wish him well. A small migratory bird tells us that, once Derek has completed his spell in Wales, he will be taking a well-earned 'retirement' and migrating to a new abode in southeast France. We cannot help but think that there will be plenty of people knocking at his door.

Ringers needed in Doñana

Since 1994, a regular programme of ringing has been carried out each autumn, from 1st September to 7th November, at the Ringing Station of Manecorro, in the National Park of Doñana, southwest Spain. An average of 4,000 birds, including several notable eastern rarities, has been ringed each year.

Qualified ringers with a good knowledge of moult are required to take part in this important programme, and others with a reasonable understanding of scientific ringing are also invited to participate as assistants. Ringing is carried out daily from dawn until dusk, and accommodation will be provided by the Biological Station of Doñana in El Rocio village, only 1 km from the ringing station.

Further information is available from José Luis Arroyo Matos, Reserva Biologica de Doñana, Apdo. 4, 21760 Matalascañas, Huelva, Spain; tel. + 34 959 440032/36; fax + 34 959 440033; e-mail: joseluis@cbd.csic.es

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New Editor for Welsh Birds

After many years at the helm, Mike Shrubb has passed on the editorship of the Welsh Ornithological Society's biannual journal *Welsh Birds* to a new editor, Graham Williams, formerly a reserves manager for the RSPB. The new editor can be contacted at Swn yr Afon, 14 Dolerw Park Drive, Newtown, Powys SY16 2BA.

A plain guide to bird protection

We have seen well-thumbed copies in police stations, on reserve wardens' desks and in solicitors' offices. It is, of course, the RSPB leaflet *Wild Birds and the Law*, the latest edition of which has recently been published. If you want to know anything about legislation relating to bird protection since (and including) the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, this is the place to look. You will find a check-list of the legal status of British bird species, together with a list of the various schedules appended to the Act. If you wish to know about the sale of eggs, cage sizes for birds in captivity, powers of the Secretary of State, or what to do if you see an offence being committed, then this is the place to find the information. Copies are available from RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

Continuing this theme, after a hearing at Stamford Magistrates Court, in July this year, a local man was fined £250 for destroying the nest of a House Martin *Delichon urbica*. This is believed to be the first conviction for this offence, and it came after the man was witnessed dislodging the nest on his house with a pole, and putting the contents into a skip. Many people may be unaware that House Martins are a protected species, and that the destruction of their nests constitutes an offence, for which the maximum penalty, in England and Wales, has recently been increased to £5,000 or a six-month prison sentence. A paper by the RSPB, which looks at the importance of human dwellings in providing nesting sites for birds, will be published soon in *British Birds*.

Seabirds around the Falkland Islands

For anyone with an interest in seabirds in the South Atlantic, a new report has recently been published. *Vulnerable Concentrations of Seabirds in Falkland Islands Waters* is the result of two years' survey work by a Seabirds At Sea Team working around the islands, and it identifies concentrations of seabirds at different times of the year. The report is available from Falklands Conservation, 1 Princes Avenue, Finchley, London N3 2DA, price £11.50 (including p&p).

More action on albatrosses and petrels

In February 2001, in Cape Town, South Africa, a group of countries, including the United Kingdom, completed negotiations on the text of a new *Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels* (ACAP). This treaty, which is unlikely to come into force before 2002, aims to 'achieve and maintain a favourable conservation status for albatrosses and petrels', for which it contains an Action Plan. Albatrosses (Diomedeinae) have the highest proportion of threatened species of any bird family; of the 24 species, 21 have populations which are declining or of unknown status. About half of all albatross populations contain fewer than 100 breeding pairs, which makes them extremely vulnerable.

The new treaty, although addressing the problem of industrial fisheries, has a broad scope which covers threats ranging from use of eggs to marine pollution. With particular relevance to the Falkland Islands, it is hoped that the UK and FI governments will decide to take action to implement the recommendations before they come into force officially, because seabirds around the islands are particularly at risk from illegal, unreported and unregulated longline fisheries. Moreover, the UK government may additionally consider means of implementing the Action Plan through the South Atlantic Fisheries Commission, in which the UK and Argentina are participants.

For more information, visit the website at http://www.ea.gov.au/biodiversity/international/albatross

Extinct birds on African islands

The human impact on the native flora and fauna of islands has very often been disastrous. In many cases, this influence has led to extinctions, and now a very high proportion of the endangered and critically endangered bird species, as defined in BirdLife International's *Threatened Birds of the World*, are to be found on remote island groups. Islands off the African continent, from Madeira to Tristan da Cunha in the Atlantic, and from Socotra to Madagascar off the east coast, are no exception. A recent survey, published in *Africa Birds & Birding* (Vol. 6: 32-40), has compared the number of species that have become extinct since 1600 with those currently endangered. There are some interesting comparisons. Madagascar tops the list, with 11 currently endangered or critically endangered species (two of which may be extinct), but only two species known to have become extinct since 1600. By contrast, Rodrigues has ten species which have become extinct, while only one extant species is endangered. The islands off the west coast have generally fared much better, with only one extinction, the Canarian Black Oystercatcher *Haematopus meadewaldoi*, and eight endangered or critically endangered species. Contact *Africa Birds & Birding*, PO Box 44223, Claremont 7735, Cape Town, South Africa.

Requests

A number of major papers are planned for publication in *British Birds* in the coming months. For some of these, details of which are given below, high-quality transparencies or colour prints are required. Initial submission of jpeg digital images for assessment purposes is acceptable. Unless stated otherwise, these should be sent to the *BB* editor, Chapel Cottage, Dunrossness, Shetland ZE2 9JH; e-mail: editor@britishbirds.co.uk

Full acknowledgment will be given in the relevant papers, and photographers will be eligible for payment for all material used. The papers are as follows:

Raptor passage in Middle East

For a paper on the migration of raptors through the Middle East, by Dan Alon *et al.*, photographs of any raptor species taken on migration in Israel, or in any other Middle Eastern country, are needed.

Pale Peregrine Falcons

A paper on identification of Peregrine Falcons *Falco peregrinus* (considering the paler types and the subspecies *calidus* especially), by Klaus Malling Olsen & Andrea Corso, requires photographs both for research and for possible publication. These should be sent to: Klaus Malling Olsen, Smorumvej 221, 2.t.v., DK 2700 Bronshoj, Denmark; e-mail: calidris@worldonline.dk

Identification and taxonomy of the Brent Goose complex

For a paper on the identification and taxonomy of the Brent Goose *Branta bernicla* complex, the following are required: standing shots of nominate *bernicla*, of all age-classes, particularly when standing alongside individuals of any other taxa/populations; standing shots of any apparent/likely hybrids, mixed pairs, and any 'hybrid' offspring; photos of any captive geese of forms other than *brota*, especially when these are of known age; flight shots, showing upperwing and underwing patterns, of *bernicla* and *nigricans* (or '*orientalis*') of all age-classes (juveniles, first-winters or adults); any photos of 'Grey-bellied Brant' (cf. *Birding World* 14: 151-155) taken in Europe; and any series of known individuals (especially ringed birds) at different ages/in different plumages.

Looking back

Twenty-five years ago:

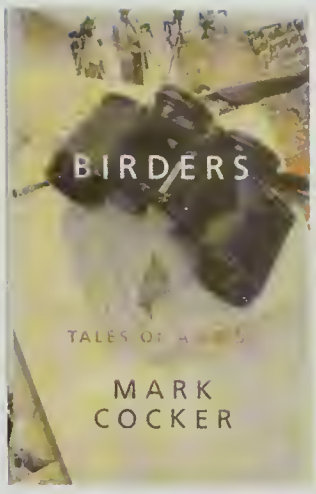
[From 'Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 1975 (with additions for nine previous years)']

'As the Americans moved away, the true measure of the waves of rare Palearctic passerines became recognised. They seemed to be everywhere, and October 1975 was the most magical month in the recorded history of rare birds in Britain. Even hallowed memories of October 1968 paled as an astonishing variety of birds appeared from Fair Isle round to Scilly, with the beautiful woods at Holkham in Norfolk providing the best ever mainland rarity watching. The number of rare Siberian and Asiatic passerines seen during the autumn was at least 48 (twice the 1974 total) and their proportion in the populations of other migrants was noticeably higher than usual. One in two of the Asiatic vagrants was a Pallas's Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus* and for every one there were at least four Yellow-browed Warblers *P. inornatus*. There can hardly have been a broadleaved wood on the east coast that did not receive one of these sprites. With them came the second ever Bimaculated Lark *Melanocorypha bimaculata* [on St Mary's, Scilly], three Asiatic thrushes, a Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*, an Ehrenberg's Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus samamisicus*, a Siberian Rubythroat *Luscinia calliope* (another first for Britain and Fair Isle's chief prize), four Lanceolated Warblers *Locustella lanceolata* (all on Fair Isle, three on one day), two Desert Warblers *Sylvia nana*, three Radde's Warblers *Phylloscopus schwarzi* and two Dusky Warblers *P. fuscatus* (all five in north Norfolk), both of Britain's rarest pipits [Pechora *Anthus gustavi* and Olive-backed *A. hodgsoni*], and Norfolk's rival to the Rubythroat, a Yellow-browed Bunting *Emberiza chrysophrys* (yet another first British record) which lurked all one day next to scores of observers but was seen by only three.' (*Brit. Birds* 69: 324, September 1976)

Reviews

BIRDERS: TALES OF A TRIBE

By Mark Cocker.
Jonathan Cape, London,
2001. 230 pages.
ISBN 0-224-06002-3.
Hardback, £15.99.



Birders: tales of a tribe is partly autobiographical, tracing the development of Mark Cocker's birding CV from schoolboy days to leader of foreign tours. Much more, however, it is an attempt to explain the *raison d'être* for birding, the motives, the means, the triumphs and the satisfaction of a successful trip or a good day in the field. To some extent, it overlaps (and updates) the territory explored by Bill Oddie's *Little Black Bird Book*, that masterly early-1980s essay on birdwatchers ('tense, competitive, selfish, shifty...'). Cocker's writing is beautifully crafted, and his coverage of the language, terminology and equipment of birding is perhaps more eloquent than Oddie's, which was more irreverent and more humorous. This book is, however, still extremely entertaining, all the way from the origins of the word 'twitching' to the author's self-confessed fetish for Alwych notebooks.

The central theme of the book is, however, the portrayal of birders as a tribe: what the tribe stands for, its rules and conventions, what it takes to belong, and above all the oral history of that tribe, its tales. Many tales are recounted, with great skill, covering some of the tribe's *personae dramatis*, from Richard Richardson to Ron Johns, together with events that form part of birding folklore. Stories of twitching heroics, of hitching nightmares, of foreign adventures: stories such as the one about 'scope-throwing competitions' on Scilly in the old days; of Clive Byers and his mates being sprayed with slurry by an irate farmer at the Reading Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* in 1976; of Nancy's café at Cley before the days of birdlines and pagers; and of Shetland in the 1970s, including the Sibe Cleaning company and the birder who lived in a linen cupboard as part of a masterly economy drive. I had come across many of these tales before, recounted and embellished by birders all the way from Scilly to Fair Isle, but to have them properly researched and recorded for posterity in this way is an important means of preserving part of the tradition and social history of birding in the latter part of twentieth-century Britain.

Inevitably, the tales are biased towards the author's circle of friends, and have a distinct Norfolk flavour, which perhaps not everyone will relate to. Nevertheless, I enjoyed this book tremendously, not least because reading it brought back so many memories, and I predict that it will be widely read and appreciated.

Roger Riddington

THE BIRDWATCHER'S HANDBOOK: A GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF BRITAIN AND IRELAND

By Jonathan Elphick.
BBC Worldwide, London,
2001. 320 pages; colour illustrations; distribution maps.
ISBN 0563-534168.
Paperback, £14.99.

The renaming of this second edition as a 'handbook' on British and Irish birds gives a much better reflection of its true value. It is among the two or three most informative field guides in pocket-sized format. Unlike its rivals, it deals only with the region's commonest 300 species and, while there are inevitable anomalies (both Great *Puffinus gravis* and Cory's Shearwaters *Calonectris diomedea* appear, yet neither Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* nor Little Egret *Egretta garzetta* receives full treatment), its focus on those birds most frequently encountered weeds out a mass of confusing rarities for the beginner.

Elphick provides an extremely thorough account of the identification of each species, a detailed distribution map covering Britain and Ireland, plus a handy precis of data on habitats, migration, population, diet, voice and breeding behaviour. The bulk of the (rather small) illustrations are of a high standard, and give excellent coverage of variation within a species. The unavoidably small text may reduce the book's readership potential, but this is still the best and most practical beginner's guide to British and Irish birds.

Mark Cocker

WHERE TO WATCH BIRDS IN SOUTHERN & WESTERN SPAIN

By Ernest Garcia & Andrew Paterson. Christopher Helm, A & C Black, London, 2001. 358 pages. ISBN 0-7136-5301-9. Paperback, £14.99.

This is the second edition of *Where to Watch Birds in Southern Spain*, which first appeared in 1994. The addition of 'Western' in the title reflects the fact that this new version is the companion to a volume covering northern and eastern Spain, rather than providing more extensive geographical coverage. The introduction describes changes since the first edition, with sections on conservation issues, changes in the avifauna, and changes in classification status and names. The arrival of recent colonisers such as Rüppell's Vulture *Gyps rueppellii*, Little Swift *Apus affinis* and a variety of escaped tropical finches (Estrildidae) provides little compensation for the list of declining and highly sought-after specialities. The introductory section has been expanded for the cyber-age to include a section on 'Internet birding' in the region, which provides addresses for a number of informative websites.

The maps have all been redrawn and, although the new style is not necessarily better, they remain clear and concise. The new illustrations, by Stephen Message, are, however, an undoubted improvement on the previous line-drawings. The revised text has been expanded to include 186 sites, ten more than in the previous edition.

The first edition provided a very thorough and readable text for planning and executing successful birding trips to the region. I have used it on several visits, when it proved invaluable for identifying key sites for target species. The significance of observations by visiting birders is easily derived from the comprehensive systematic species lists, which form a mini regional avifauna. I would recommend this guide to anyone planning a trip to the region.

Adam Rowlands

A FIELD GUIDE TO THE BIRDS OF KOREA

By Woo-Shin Lee, Tae-Hoe Koo & Jin-Young Park. Illustrations by Takashi Taniguchi. Translated by Desmond Allen. LG Evergreen Foundation, Seoul, 2000. 330 pages; colour paintings and distribution maps. ISBN 89-951415-1-4. Paperback, £24.95.

Despite being relatively inexpensive to visit, and offering some superb birdwatching, Korea has been strangely neglected by foreign travellers. If this has been due to the lack of a readily affordable English-language field guide to whet the appetite, then this fine little book should rectify that.

While there are several worthy (if expensive) field guides in Korean, this is the first English-language guide to cover all the species recorded in the country. It is laid out in the standard field-guide format, with distribution maps and text facing the illustrations. Although centred on the Korean peninsula, four different range maps are used, depending on each species' distribution within eastern/northeast Asia. This may be a little confusing to those unfamiliar with the region's geography, but it will make the book of value to visitors anywhere in mainland northeast Asia. To make it a true pocket guide, the text is very succinct, but will be informative to novice birdwatchers. The illustrations by Takashi Taniguchi are, by and large, bright, attractive and accurate, although the gulls (Laridae) in particular could be improved upon. I discovered one or two obvious errors: for example, Mute Swans *Cygnus olor* winter on the east, not the west, coast, while Oriental White Storks *Ciconia boyciana* winter in the south of the peninsula. The checklist at the beginning seems superfluous in a book of this nature.

Although not to the standard expected nowadays in Britain, this is a practical and functional basic guide. It is to be hoped that it will achieve its aim of stimulating an interest in birds among the Korean people. I assume that there is, or will be, a Korean version.

Phil Heath

WHALES AND DOLPHINS OF THE EUROPEAN ATLANTIC, THE BAY OF BISCAY AND THE ENGLISH CHANNEL

By Graeme Cresswell & Dylan Walker. Wild Guides, Hampshire, 2001. 56 pages; 14 colour-photograph plates. ISBN 1-903657-00-8. Paperback, £8.00.

This is a ground-breaking identification guide to the 27 species of cetacean which occur in the European Atlantic, especially the Bay of Biscay, the importance of which for whales and dolphins these authors helped to establish. Rather than using illustrations of the whole animal, which are often totally useless in a field setting, the authors have selected dozens of digitally altered photographs of what one really sees when cetaceans come to the surface. Most of the images are of high quality, the text is clear and accurate, and the book is pocket-sized and well laid out. In combination, these attributes make this the best identification guide available on some of the world's most impressive inhabitants.

Mark Cocker

Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary of unchecked reports covers late July to late August

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 13th August. **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Lodmoor RSPB Reserve (Dorset), 26th July; Poole Harbour (Dorset), 29th-30th July; Normandy Marshes (Hampshire), from 17th August, possibly earlier, to 19th August; Barnes WWT Wetland Centre (London), 18th August; Walberswick (Suffolk), 26th-27th August; Stanwell Moor (Surrey), 27th August. **Great White Egret** *Egretta alba* Inner Marsh Farm RSPB Reserve (Cheshire), 23rd July; presumed same, Frodsham (Cheshire), 28th July; Flint (Clwyd), 12th-26th August; Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire), 13th August; Llanelli (Dyfed), 15th August; long-stayer in Cleveland throughout the period. **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* St Mary's (Scilly), 27th August. **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* Lough Beg (Co. Londonderry), 16th August. **Black Duck** *Anas rubripes* Charleton Marsh (Devon), 30th July to 23rd August; returning individual at Stithian's Reservoir (Cornwall), same period. **King Eider** *Somateria spectabilis* Female, Greenisland (Co. Antrim), to at least 16th August. **Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni* St Mary's, 27th August. **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* Barra (Western Isles), 3rd August; Severn Beach (Gloucestershire), 4th August; South Uist (Western Isles), 4th-16th August; Cley (Norfolk), 5th August. **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* Alaw Estuary (Anglesey), 25th August. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* Aberlady Bay/Musselburgh (Lothian), 22nd-27th August. **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 25th August. **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Belfast Lough RSPB Reserve (Co. Down), from 12th August. **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* Snettisham (Norfolk), 5th and 9th August, presumably same as individual in July. **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* Plymouth (Devon), 4th August. **Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica* Spurn (East Yorkshire), 11th August. **Caspian Tern** *Sterna caspia* Stanpit Marsh (Dorset), 23rd July; Blakeney (Norfolk), 23rd July; presumed same, Titchwell (Norfolk), and past Sheringham (Norfolk), 24th July. **Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger* Widespread inland passage on 23rd August, including 100 King George VI Reservoir (Surrey), and 150 Chew Valley Lake (Somerset). **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* Draycote Water (Warwickshire), 29th-31st July; Cley, 3rd-5th August; Blagdon Lake (Somerset), 4th-10th August; Sizewell (Suffolk), 22nd August; Blakeney Point, 24th August; Kingsbury Water Park (Warwickshire), 26th August. **European Roller** *Coracias garrulus* Near Cliffs of Moher (Co. Clare), late July to 8th August. **Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis* Hannafore Point (Cornwall), found dead, 30th July. **Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis* Strumble Head (Pembrokeshire), 24th August. **Booted Warbler** *Hippolais caligata* Bardsey (Gwynedd), 23rd August; St Agnes (Scilly), 26th August. **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* Nanquidno (Cornwall), 24th-25th August. **Rosy Starling** *Sturnus roseus* New arrivals reported: Benbecula (Western Isles), 27th July to 4th August; Carlton Colville (Suffolk), 30th-31st July; Whalsay (Shetland), found dead, 2nd August; Scalloway (Shetland), 4th August; St Sampson's (Guernsey), 7th August; Leiston (Suffolk), 9th August; Lewis (Western Isles), 10th-16th August;



Gary Bellingham

252. Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni*, Mona, Anglesey, July 2001.



George Reszeter

253. Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*, Farmoor Reservoir, Oxfordshire ,August



Gary Bellingham

254. European Storm-petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus*, Heysham harbour, Lancashire, July 2001.

Pitmedden (Aberdeenshire), 11th-14th August; Bigton (Shetland), 12th August; Helston (Cornwall), 19th-26th August; Tingwall (Shetland), 25th August; Fair Isle (Shetland), 25th-26th August; Waxham (Norfolk), 25th August. **Two-barred Crossbill** *Loxia leucoptera* Spiggie (Shetland), 22nd July; Isle of May (Fife), 27th July to 3rd August. **Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala* Portland (Dorset), 11th August.

Daily Log: July

Shearwaters, predominantly **Manx Shearwaters** *Puffinus puffinus*, featured prominently in seawatching reports from many observatories during the month. Along the east coast, numbers were relatively modest: the peak count of **Manx Shearwaters** past Fair Isle (Shetland) was seven on 23rd, while, farther south, Filey (North Yorkshire) recorded a peak of 244 south on 18th, compared with the top count for Spurn (East Yorkshire) of 152 on 17th and 60 past Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire) on the same day. Filey reported single **Cory's Shearwaters** *Calonectris diomedea* on 7th and 19th, and there were **Sooty Shearwaters** *P. griseus* on two dates at Fair Isle, and 20 north off Gibraltar Point on 17th. Along the south coast, observers at Dungeness (Kent) logged 12 **Manx Shearwaters** east and 155 west on 8th, while at Portland (Dorset) there were 400 on 12th, 150 on 17th (along with a **Sooty** and 12 **Balearic Shearwaters** *P. mauretanicus*), and 600 on 19th (along with eight **Balearics**); on 26th, an impressive 90 **Balearic Shearwaters** were recorded there. As expected, counts from the west of Britain were far in excess of those in the east, with 24,000 **Manx** and a single **Balearic Shearwater** off Bardsey (Gwynedd) on 6th, 1,211 **Manx** off the Calf of Man (Isle of Man) on 11th (and 100+ on two other dates), and a peak count of 107 **Manx** at Walney (Cumbria) on 10th, with five other days with 40 or more. A **Cory's Shearwater** was an undoubted highlight at the latter site, on 12th. All these were comfortably eclipsed by the Irish figures: Copeland (Co. Down) reported a raft of 6,000 **Manx** on 22nd, the biggest ever there, while at Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) **Manx Shearwaters** streamed past in colossal numbers. Peak passage of more than 10,000 per hour was witnessed on four dates, reaching 15,000 per hour on 6th and 8th, with another four days when 6,000-8,000 per hour were logged. Small numbers of **Sooty Shearwaters** were seen here, with a maximum of nine on 30th, a single **Balearic** on the same day and single **Cory's** on 11th and 21st.

Cape Clear seawatchers logged 100 **European Storm-petrels** *Hydrobates pelagicus* on 2nd and 130 on 30th, with single **Wilson's Storm-petrels** *Oceanites oceanicus* on 17th and 28th. Walney reported the only other sizeable count of 'stormies', with 50 on 12th, but one **Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel** *Pterodroma madeira/feae* south there on 22nd was its bird of the month by some distance.

Common Scoters *Melanitta nigra* featured at several sites, particularly on the east side of the country, with 130 north at Spurn on 14th and 124 north there on 18th, 280 north at Gibraltar Point on 16th and 170 north there on 18th, and no fewer than 1,000 at Holme (Norfolk) on 9th and 11th, and 300 on 19th. There were 134 off Portland on 16th and 113 there on 24th, with 120 at Cape Clear on 13th.

Skuas were generally rather scarce, but Filey managed all four of the regular species, with two **Pomarine Skuas** *Stercorarius pomarinus* on 18th and singles on 20th and 31st, and a **Long-tailed Skua** *S. longicaudus* on 18th. Dungeness recorded six **Pomarine Skuas** east on 4th.

A total of 1,350 **Kittiwakes** *Rissa tridactyla* moved south off Spurn on 10th, and 500 off Copeland on 12th. There were a number of sizeable counts of **Sandwich Terns** *Sterna sandvicensis* along the east coast, with 450 south at Spurn on 17th, 440 south there on 28th and 930 north on 18th. Gibraltar Point recorded 450 north on 16th and 480 north on 17th, while there were 400 at Holme on 21st.

The above summary of unchecked news was supplied by the Bird Observatories Council's 'grapevine', courtesy of the British Trust for Ornithology

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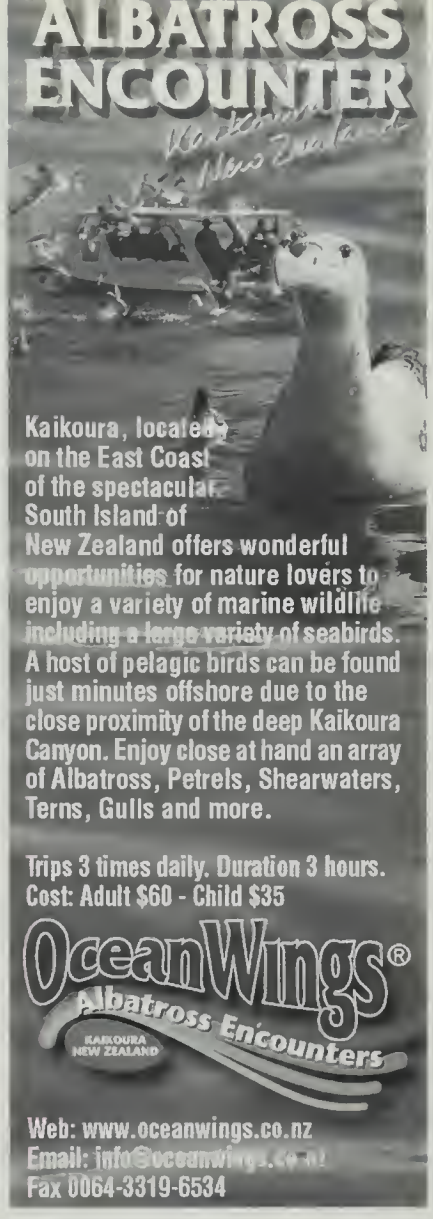
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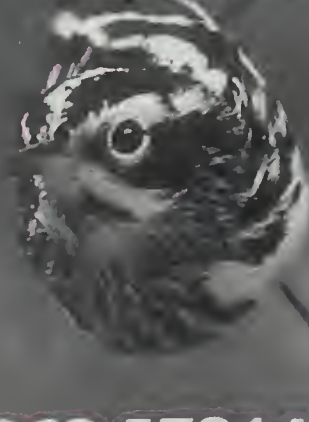
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Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2000

M. J. Rogers and the Rarities Committee

with comments by John McLoughlin and Jimmy Steele

This is the forty-third annual Report of the British Birds Rarities Committee and, once again, it demonstrates the important role of both the Report and the Committee. In an average year, we now process about 1,000 records, and only about 5% of reasonable claims either are not submitted or are sent in too late for scrutiny in the appropriate year. The Committee works closely with members of the network of County Bird Recorders and Bird Observatory Wardens, and produces the only report for which detailed descriptions are assessed independently by a panel of democratically elected individuals.

Some of the rarest birds recorded in 2000 do not appear in this report, since records of any species previously unrecorded in Britain has to be ratified by both the BBRC and the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (BOURC). Records of Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*, Siberian Blue Robin *Lusciuia cyane* and Long-tailed Shrike *Lanius schach*, all species which were reported during the year 2000, have been passed from BBRC to BOURC, whilst the Booted Eagle *Hieraaetus pennatus* from 1999 is still under consideration by BOURC. There are several other important records which are still in circulation with BBRC. The species concerned include Southern Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus*, 'Wilson's Snipe' *Gallinago (gallinago) delicata*, Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*, South Polar Skua *Catharacta maccormicki*, Oriental Lark *Alauda gulgula* and Blyth's Pipit *Anthus godlewskii*. Of all these records, that of the putative Slender-billed Curlew at Druridge Bay, Northumberland, in May 1998 has generated the greatest debate, both within and outside the Committee. This record has almost completed its most recent recirculation, and we are close to reaching a decision. To compensate for those that are missing, this year's report contains details of three additions to the British list. These are: Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*, at Rosehearty, Aberdeenshire, during 11th-24th September 1999 (and subsequently at Seal Sands, Cleveland, 29th September to 30th October 1999), Black Tern *Chlidonias niger* of the Nearctic race *surinamensis*, at Weston-super-Mare, Avon, on 3rd-11th October 1999, and Rufous Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos* of the eastern race *hafizi*, on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 30th October 1971.

Readers will be aware that, last year, we included few Irish records, and will see that this year we include only Northern Ireland records from the year 2000, and pre-1999 records from the Irish Republic. The cycle of reporting is such that our Report is finalised before publication of the *Irish Bird Report*. The Irish Rare Birds Committee (IRBC) is, understandably, reluctant to supply us with Irish records prior to their publication in the *Irish Bird Report* (*Brit. Birds* 92: 429-430). Reviews of Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* and Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens* records, recently undertaken by the IRBC (*Irish Birds* 6: 407-416), have made a significant difference to the statistics for both species. Other changes in species statistics have arisen because we now include all 'at sea' records in the species totals. Previously, birds seen 'at sea', rather than in inshore waters, were not included in the

THE NATURAL HIS... ...UM

species totals and, even though we have traditionally included all Irish land and inshore-water records, we did not take into account birds seen in the Irish Sea. It seems, however, more sensible to include the sea, since this is an integral part of the zoogeographical region of Britain and Ireland. In addition, the boundary of 200 nautical miles (370 km), or the half-way point between Britain and the nearest country (whichever is the smaller), is synonymous with the British and Irish Economic Exclusion Zones (*Brit. Birds* 85: 332), and these are, in turn, the limits of British and Irish responsibilities under the European Union Habitats Directive. We feel that our position now reflects scientific sensibility, as well as satisfying a legal recording responsibility.

The series of Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* records from Scilly is a testament to the pioneering work of several local observers, of whom R. L. Flood and E. A. Fisher deserve special mention. The recording and assessment of rare seabirds is a particularly difficult task. Over recent years, records have been submitted for several species new to Britain, in addition to numerous other rarities, from keen sea-watchers. What standard should we apply to the assessment of such records? One could argue, however unpopular it might be, that standards for the acceptance of rare seabirds, and in particular those which would be 'firsts', should be higher than for other species. After all, since most seabirds fly past quickly, often in poor conditions, and typically giving the observer(s) little chance of a second look, the possibility of making mistakes is much higher than with landbirds. Many other species are no more difficult to identify in flight than are, for example, Little Shearwater or Wilson's Storm-petrel, but would anyone seriously consider accepting a record which would be a first for Britain (perhaps a Marbled Godwit *Limosa fedoa*), an extreme rarity (for example, a White-winged Lark *Melanocorypha leucoptera*) or even something more common, such as Calandra Lark *M. calandra*, if it was seen only in flight for a couple of minutes in poor conditions and at a range of half a kilometre or more? These are, arguably, no less easy to identify than are many of the rare seabirds that are currently claimed with confidence on such views. Flood and Fisher have demonstrated the value of a change in culture, one in which pelagic trips become commonplace and rare seabirds are photographed and fully documented. Such behaviour is the norm in most non-European countries, despite the cost, so why should it be different here? Would Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* ever have been accepted onto the British List without the high-quality documentation of the first series of records? How nice it is to see another record of this esoteric seabird after an eight-year gap. No decision has yet been reached on any reported Little Shearwater from Britain in 2000, since the Committee wished to see the outcome of the aforementioned Irish review, along with its views on identification, and to assess these recent claims using that additional information. Perhaps we need a series of photographed individuals to convince the sceptics that this species does occur in British waters, and not just down burrows.

This report may be slightly anticlimactic to the growing band of gull-watchers in Britain, since it contains no British record of any member of the 'large white-headed gull' complex. We do, however, wish to receive all properly documented records of 'Caspian Gull' (currently treated as the nominate race of Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans*) up to and including 31st December 1999, in order to place it formally on the British List and to establish a baseline of well-documented records. Following that, we intend to make a decision as to the most appropriate manner of further assessment (*Brit. Birds* 93: 303). Records of the American race of Herring Gull *L. argentatus smithsonianus*, together with other races of both Herring and Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus,* will first be examined by a sub-group of the BBRC in order to establish criteria for acceptance. We shall publish the results of this work at a later date.

It is, however, not all disappointing news this year. This report contains details of some wonderful birds, including the aforementioned Swinhoe's Storm-petrel, the first mainland Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* since the 19th century, the third 'Hudsonian Whimbrel' *Numenius phaeopus hudsonicus*, the first Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* since

1977, the first autumn Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* and the second British Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*.

BBRC would like to thank all County Recorders, Bird Observatory Wardens and their respective records committees, who make our life a great deal easier; Judith Smith for much administrative help with BBRC communications; and Martin Eccles and Chris Kehoe for help in selecting photographs for the annual report. We should also like to thank Paul Buckley, Ned Brinkley, Bill Clark, Charles Collins, Alan Dean, Jim Enticott, Dick Forsman, Kimball Garrett, Ricard Gutierrez, Erik Hirschfeld, Hannu Jännes, Al Jaramillo, Paul Lehman, Killian Mullarney, Dennis Paulsen, Ian Phillips, Ron Pittaway, Gunter De Smet, Lars Svensson and Steve Votier for their help in assessing difficult records this year, and Keith Naylor for his extensive practical assistance in respect of historical data.

Last but not least, we continue to be enormously grateful to Carl Zeiss Ltd for sponsorship of the Committee's work, which has supported us for the past 19 years.

Colin Bradshaw

Systematic list of accepted records

The principles and procedures followed in considering records were explained in the 1958 Report (*Brit. Birds* 53: 155-158). The systematic list is set out in the same way as in the 1998 Report (92: 554-609). The following points show the basis on which the list has been compiled:

1. The details included for each record are (1) county; (2) locality; (3) number of birds if more than one, and age and sex if known (in the case of spring and summer records, however, the age is normally given only where the bird concerned was not in adult plumage); (4) if photographed, tape-recorded or video-recorded (and this evidence assessed by the Committee); (5) if trapped or found dead and where specimen is stored, if known; (6) dates(s); and (7) observer(s), in alphabetical order.
2. In general, this report is confined to records that are regarded as certain, and 'probables' are not included. In the cases of the very similar American *Pluvialis dominica* and Pacific Golden Plovers *P. fulva*, Long-billed *Limnodromus scolopacens* and Short-billed Dowitchers *L. griseus* and Eastern *Phylloscopus orientalis* and Western Bonelli's Warblers *P. bonelli*, however, we publish indeterminate records, and this also applies to those of pratincoles *Glareola*, albatrosses *Diomedea* and frigatebirds *Fregata* (but see *Brit. Birds* 94: 395).
3. The sequence of species, English names and scientific nomenclature follow *The 'British Birds' List of the Western Palearctic* (1997).
4. The three numbers in parentheses after each species name refer specifically to the total number of individuals recorded in Britain & Ireland (i) to the end of 1957, (ii) for the period since the formation of the Rarities Committee in 1958, but excluding (iii) those listed here for the current year. The decision as to how many individuals were involved is often difficult, but a consensus view is represented by 'possibly the same' (counted as different in the totals), 'probably the same' (counted as the same in the totals), or 'the same' when evidence is certain or overwhelming. An identical approach is applied to records of a particular species recurring at the same, or a nearby, locality after a lapse of time. In considering claims of more than one individual at the same or adjacent localities, the Committee requires firm evidence before more than one is accepted.
5. Irish records, assessed and accepted by the Irish Rare Birds Committee (IRBC) or by the Northern Ireland Birdwatchers' Association (NIBA), are included separately, following the subheading IRELAND (but see pages 452-453).
6. The breeding and wintering ranges are given in parentheses at the beginning of each species' comment.

White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* (18, 202, 4)

Argyll Loch Na Keal, Mull, first-summer, 21st May at least (G. & N. Greatholder, T. Owen).
Orkney Papa Westray, adult, 12th, 18th January (the late J. Mason). Rapness Sound, adult, 30th May (I. Dillon).
Shetland Near Kirkabister, Nesting, adult, 24th-25th April (P.V. Harvey *et al.*).

(Arctic Russia eastwards to Arctic Canada) By recent standards, four in a year is a poor return. After last year's wide geographical spread of records, this species has reverted to type, with all records from the Northern and Western Isles.

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* (0, 37, 3)

Highland Loch Oscaig, Alchiltibuie, Wester Ross, 24th-25th April, photo. (S. E. Edwards *et al.*).
Scilly St Agnes, first-winter, 25th October, seen killed by Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* (D. Page, N. Wheatley).
Yorkshire, North River Ure, North Stainley, 9th April (J. R. Mather); present 6th-21st, photo.
IRELAND
1998 Cork Rostellan, since 10th October 1997, to 31st March (*Brit. Birds* 92: 557; *Irish Birds* 6: 287); presumed same, 29th June to 20th April 1999 (*Irish Birds* 6: 379).

(North America) More spring records, which are suggestive of northbound migrants; note also the departure dates of the two Irish records. In complete contrast, the unfortunate Scilly bird was apparently newly arrived and very tired, presumably after a long transatlantic flight. After stopping briefly for a rest on St Agnes it decided to fly on, which proved to be a mistake.

Black-browed Albatross *Diomedea melanophris* (2, 27, 0)

1999 At sea Sea area Plymouth, 16-22 km SW of Looe, Cornwall, immature, 19th, 22nd June, photo. (P. Dilling, S. Rendell *et al.*).

(Southern oceans) What else is lingering down there? This one was seen and photographed from a fishing boat, and record shots found their way into the national press. The fishermen reportedly believed that, together with the impending solar eclipse, it was a bad omen!

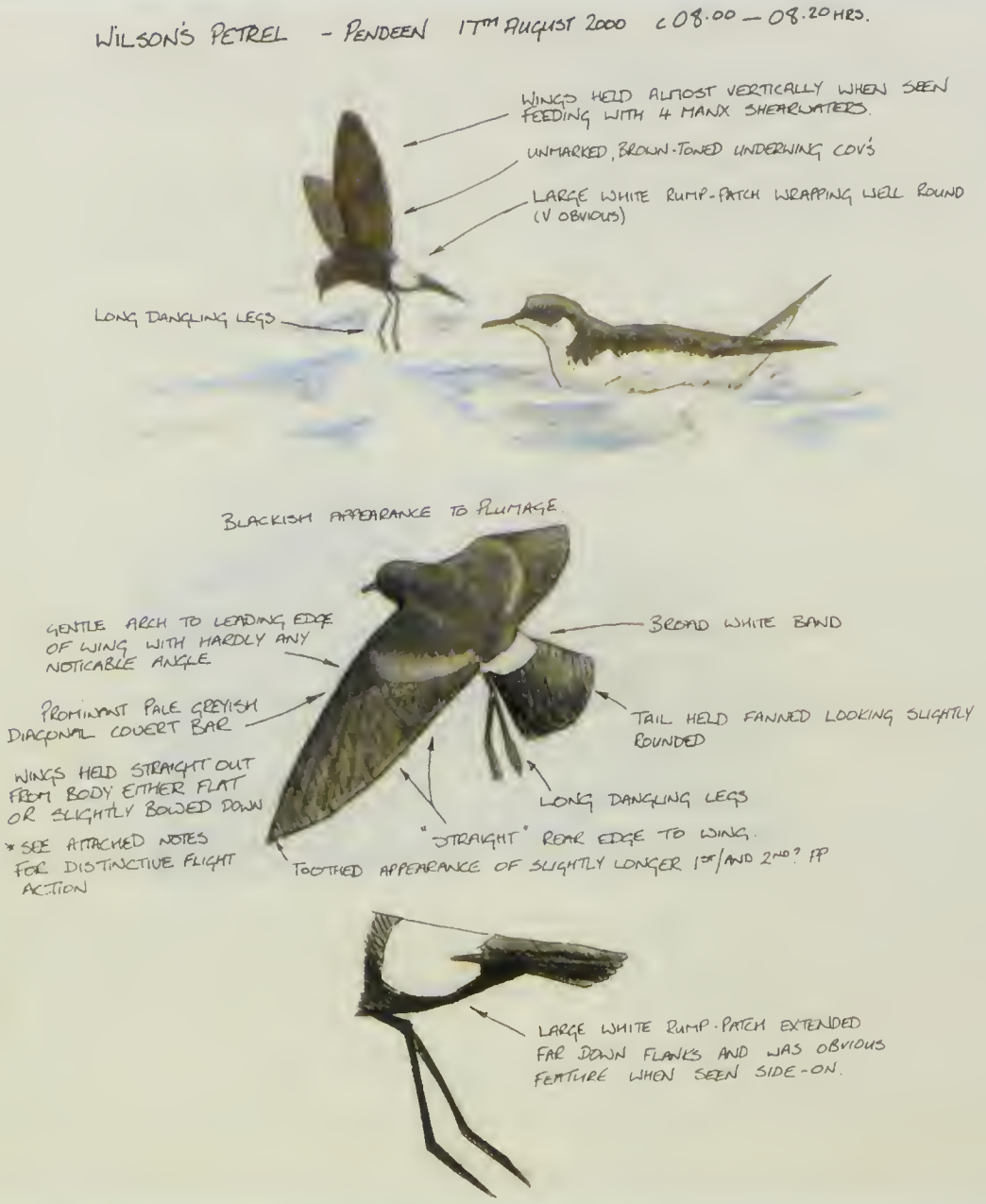
Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel *Pterodroma madeira/feae* (0, 38, 0)

1999 Northumberland St Mary's Island, 19th November (A. Curry, N. Dales, T. Watson); presumed same, Farne Islands, 19th (S. E. Duffield).
1999 Scilly About 5 km S of St Agnes, 31st August (R. L. Flood, P. K. Greaves, M. S. Scott *et al.*).
IRELAND
1991 Cork Galley Head, 17th September (*Irish Birds* 6: 380).
1992 Cork Old Head of Kinsale, 4th August (*Irish Birds* 6: 380).
1996 Cork Galley Head, 27th July (*Irish Birds* 6: 380).
1998 Cork Cape Clear Island, 8th September (*Irish Birds* 6: 380).
1998 Waterford Helvick Head, 6th September (*Irish Birds* 6: 380).

(Central Atlantic) This species (records are almost certainly of the rare *P. feae* rather than the vanishingly rare *P. madeira*) continues to be an enigma. The Northumberland record (or records) constitutes the latest in Great Britain by more than a month. The sightings were separated by a few hours and about 64 km; in both cases the bird flew north, but the one off the Farne Islands (which are farther north than St Mary's Island) was seen first. Although they are recorded here as 'presumed same', they may quite easily have been different birds. This illustrates not only the ability of seabirds to defy all logic, but also the difficulty BBRC has when trying to establish statistics for this mobile group. Yet another 1999 record is still under consideration, but 2000 was a blank year, the first since 1990.

Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus* (4, 348, 32)

Cornwall Pendeen, 17th August (W. Simpson) (fig. 1).
Scilly About 5 km SW of Bishop Rock, 5th July, video. (A. Brown, R. L. Flood *et al.*). About 5 km SW of Bishop Rock, 12th July, photo. (E. A. Fisher *et al.*). About 5 km SW of Bishop Rock, three,



W. Simpson

Fig. 1. Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, Pendeen, Cornwall, August 2001.

16th July, video, photo. (E. A. Fisher, R. L. Flood, N. Wheatley *et al*). About 5 km SW of Bishop Rock, two, 17th July, photo. (E. A. Fisher *et al*). About 3-5 km S of St Mary's, 28th August (P. A. Stancliffe *et al.*).

At sea Sea area Lundy, 51°31'N 05°41'W, about 41 km WSW of Milford Haven, Pembrokeshire, two, 6th August, photo. (D. J. Astins, J. Bennett *et al.*).

At sea Sea area Sole, about 8 km S of St Mary's, Scilly, two, 25th June, video. (E. A. Fisher, R. L. Flood, A. Hicks *et al.*). About 8 km E of St Mary's, two, 2nd July (R. L. Flood *et al.*). About 13 km S of Gugh, Scilly, 18th July (E. A. Fisher *et al.*). About 7 km S of Gugh, two, 21st July, video., photo. (R. L. Flood, N. Lowton *et al.*). About 11 km S of Gugh, 25th July, video. (R. J. Hathway *et al.*). About 10 km S of St Mary's, 26th July (P. James). About 11 km S of Gugh, two, 28th July, video. (E. A. Fisher, R. L. Flood *et al.*). About 13 km SE of St Mary's, 30th July, video. (E. A. Fisher *et al.*). About 8 km S of St Mary's, two, 5th August (C. Atkins, C. Johnson, B. Richards *et al.*). About 7 km SW of Bishop Rock, 8th August, video. (E. A. Fisher *et al.*). About 12 km SSW of St Mary's, two, 12th August, video. (R. L. Flood, A. Jayne *et al.*). About 10 km S of St Mary's, two, 13th August (E. A. Fisher, R. L. Flood, A. Hicks *et al.*). About 12 km SE of St Mary's, 17th August, video. (J. & I. Miller, K. Webb). About 10-11 km S of Gugh, 19th August (R. L. Flood *et al.*).

1997 At sea Sea area Sole, about 10 km S of Scilly, at least one, 23rd August (R. L. Flood).

1998 At sea Sea area Sole, about 10 km S of Scilly, two, 28th August (R. L. Flood).
1999 At sea Sea area Sole, about 10 km S of Scilly, at least one, 24th August (R. L. Flood).
IRELAND
1998 Kerry About 6 km W of Inishtcaraght, two, 8th August (*Irish Birds* 6: 382).

(Southern oceans) This species is rapidly approaching the point where it is no longer a rarity. Although 32 is not a record total (more than 100 were recorded in 1988), this set of records is notable for the number seen quite close to land, and also for the length of the season. Previous records would suggest that this is an August speciality, but, with a group of persistent observers looking for, finding and documenting the species from June onwards, it is clear that it has a much longer summer season in the southwest.

Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* (0, 3, 1)

Northeast Scotland Cove, Aberdeen, ♀, trapped 5th August, photo. (P. A. A. Baxter, H. I. Scott *et al.*) (plate 255).

(Northwest Pacific Ocean; winters tropical Pacific and Indian Oceans) It is easy to forget that the first three records of this species were all from the same site, and involved three different birds trapped during the course of two consecutive summers a decade ago. This is, therefore, the first record in the British Isles away from Tynemouth, although there are now several records from elsewhere in western Europe.



Paul Baxter

255. Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*, Cove, Aberdeen, Northeast Scotland, August 2000.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (150, 203, 1)

Kent Oare Marshes, ♂, 28th June (A. W. Swandale).

(West Eurasia, Africa and Australasia; winters Africa and Southern Asia) The second record for Kent in consecutive years, following a very long absence, is a return to form for the county.

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (165, 440, 8)

Bedfordshire Near Broom, first-summer, 14th-21st May (S. D. Northwood *et al.*).
Ceredigion Tregaron, adult, 26th April (R. G. Liford).
Cheshire Elton Hall Flash, first-summer, 2nd June (P. & H. Miller, I. Mumford *et al.*).

Dorset Stanpit Village, first-summer, 1st May (P. Morrison *et al.*).
Gloucestershire Slimbridge, adult, 12th April to 12th May, photo. (M. J. McGill *et al.* per G. R. Avery); presumed returning 1999 individual (*Brit. Birds* 93: 517). Ashleworth Ham, adult, 5th June (R. Mitchell); presumed same as Slimbridge.
Suffolk Walberswick, adult, 25th-30th March (R. Bassett, A. A. K. Lancaster).
Sussex, East Winchelsea Beach, adult, 15th April (P. M. Troake *et al.*). Brighton Marina area, first-summer, 12th May, photo. (K. B. Gillam, I. J. Whitcomb *et al.*).
Yorkshire, East Southfield Reservoirs, first-summer, 9th-13th May (C. Featherstone, R. & D. Priestley *et al.*).
1989 Essex Aldham, adult, 10th-15th May (N. M. Rayner).
1992 Fife Glenrothes, first-summer, 24th April to at least 16th May (D. E. Dickson *et al.*).
1999 Hampshire Alver Valley, Gosport, adult, 11th April (L. Marshall *et al.*).
IRELAND
1998 Cork Clonakilty, two adults, 12th-26th April (*Irish Birds* 6: 382).

(South Eurasia, Africa and the Americas; European population winters Africa) From January 2002, BBRC will no longer consider records of this species (see *Brit. Birds* 94:290).

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (95, 51, 1)

Sussex, East Pett Level, 10th June (D., S. & S. Brown *et al.*).

(Southern Europe, Southwest Asia and Africa; winters Africa) A typical spring overshoot.

Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (2, 106, 4)

Dorset Lodmoor, 7th August (D. J. Chown, J. Stirling *et al.*); same, Abbotsbury, 7th (S. A. Groves *et al.*).
Lancashire & North Merseyside Martin Mere, since 4th December 1999, to 5th April, photo. (*Brit. Birds* 93: 519).
Norfolk Welney, 23rd-24th July (J. B. Kemp, D. Stevens).
Sussex, East Brighton Marina, 7th May (I. J. Whitcomb *et al.*); presumed same, Cuckmere Haven, 7th (M. J. Helps, P. James, A. R. Kitson *et al.*); presumed same, Rye Harbour, 16th-25th (P. M. Troake *et al.*). See also West Sussex below.
Sussex, West Henfield, 1st-12th January (A. R. Kitson *et al.*). Worthing, 7th May (P. Hall, Dr J. A. Newnham, D. I. Smith); also in East Sussex.
1998 Hampshire Winchester, 15th July (R. A. King).

(Almost cosmopolitan in tropics; nearest breeding in north of France) A mixture of wintering birds, spring overshoots and summer wanderers.

Great White Egret *Egretta alba* (10, 115, 25)

Anglesey Llyn Alaw, Alaw and Braint Estuaries, 27th June to at least 14th August (R. Pritchard *et al.*), joined by colour-ringed individual, Llyn Alaw, 14th August (D. Wright *et al.*), both to 7th September, one or other to 29th (per S. Culley).
Argyll Loch An Eilann, Tiree, 18th May (A. J. & A. Leitch); presumed same, Loch Bhasapoll, Tiree, 18th June (E. & J. Dickson, A. J. Leitch).
Cambridgeshire Fen Drayton Gravel-pits and Nene Washes, 24th July (R. Allison, J. L. F. Parslow *et al.*); also in Norfolk, Suffolk.
Cleveland Coatham Marsh, 12th June (M. A. Blick, M. N. Sewell *et al.*); also in East and West Yorkshire.
Cornwall Drift Reservoir, 2nd-5th April (B. Dodd, G. Hobin). Hayle, two, 23rd September (D. Johnson, T. Whiley, L. P. Williams *et al.*); possibly same as Norfolk, 21st-22nd.
Devon Dawlish Warren, 31st May (K. Rylands); possibly same as Gloucestershire. Bowling Green Marsh, 23rd September (S. J. Lees); possibly one of Norfolk individuals, 21st-22nd.
Gloucestershire Ashleworth Ham, 1st-6th June, photo. (A. Jayne, M. R. Smith *et al.*); possibly same as Devon, 31st May.
Greater London Kempton Park, 7th October (K. L. Purdey).

Kent Bough Beech Reservoir, 2nd September (N. A. Driver *et al.*); possibly same as East Sussex, 30th July. Dungeness, 22nd October (N. Brooks); presumed same, Walland Marsh, 25th-28th (B. Chambers *et al.*). Newenden, 15th December (P. M. Troake *et al.*); present 13th-16th.
Norfolk Welney, 26th-30th July, photo. (J. B. Kemp, D. Stevens *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plate 260); same as Cambridgeshire, also in Suffolk. Strumpshaw Fen, two, 21st-22nd September (M. S. Smith *et al.*); possibly same as Cornwall, 23rd.
Northeast Scotland Loch of Strathbeg, 7th June (P. F. Baker, P. A. A. Baxter *et al.*).
Northumberland Longhirst Flash, 22nd-23rd May, photo. (I. Fisher, S. Taylor *et al.*); possibly same as East Yorkshire, 19th.
Somerset Meare Heath, 16th August (J. A. Hazell).
Staffordshire/Warwickshire Alvecote Pools, 21st May (A. Archer).
Suffolk Minsmere, 31st July to at least 6th November, photo. (G. R. Welch *et al.*); presumed same as Cambridgeshire, Norfolk.
Sussex, East Icklesham, 30th July (S. J. R. Rumsey, T. Squire); possibly same as Kent, 2nd September. Cuckmere Haven, 21st, 23rd October (J. Curson, G. Gowlett *et al.*). Brighton Marina, 9th November (K. B. Gillam).
Yorkshire, East Tunstall, 19th May (G. E. Dobbs, T. Isherwood *et al.*); possibly also in Northumberland. Brough Haven and Welton Waters, 11th June (E. J. Hediger, R. Lyon); also in West Yorkshire; presumed same as Cleveland.
Yorkshire, West Astley Lake, 11th June (P. R. Morris); same as East Yorkshire, 11th, above.
1999 Dorset Radipole, 5th October (*Brit. Birds* 93: 519), was colour-ringed individual, also in Wiltshire, Worcestershire.
1999 Wiltshire Britford, intermittently, 3rd-22nd September, photo. (M. Heaven, R. F. Blamey *et al.*); colour-ringed individual, also in Dorset, Worcestershire.
1999 Worcestershire Westwood Great Pool, 11th-12th September (*Brit. Birds* 93: 519), colour-ringed individual, same as Dorset, Wiltshire.
1999 Yorkshire, South Broomhill Flash, 17th April (J. H. Goddard, J. O'Malley, D. M. Waddington *et al.*).
1999 Yorkshire, West Beal Carrs, 29th June (J. Cook).
IRELAND
1998 Galway Rahasane Turlough, 1st-3rd May (*Irish Birds* 6: 383).
1998 Wicklow Roundwood, since 29th November 1997, to 22nd February (*Brit. Birds* 92: 560; *Irish Birds* 6: 291).

(Almost cosmopolitan, extremely local in Europe) The steady rise in records of this species continues, and the 25 in 2000 constitute a new record total by a comfortable margin. Although we are able to untangle some multiple records, such as the 1999 Wiltshire/Worcestershire/Dorset bird documented above, the potential for overlap with so many records is, however, a headache, and, in all honesty, sorting this out is now a matter of educated guesswork. It is also worth noting that many descriptions of this species received by BBRC are rather less convincing than one might expect for an enormous white bird. In particular, the possibility of incorrect size estimation of a poorly seen Little Egret *E. garzetta* is taken very seriously.

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (many, 78, 1)

Northeast Scotland Cruden Bay, 7th January, photo. (C. Hutchinson); presumed same as Orkney.
Orkney Papa Westray, 5th-6th January (A. Houlston, J. Mason).

(Almost cosmopolitan, nearest breeding colonies in Balkans and irregularly Camargue, France) The first since 1997, this remains a very rare bird. Although mid-winter records would seem to be unlikely for a trans-Saharan migrant, they are by no means unprecedented.

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* (47, 89, 0)

Dumfries & Galloway Mersehead, 27th January (S. Bearhop, M. A. Newell, S. C. Votier *et al.*); present 11th-27th.

(Northeast Europe and Siberia; winters Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia) This individual

had been ringed as a gosling in Swedish Lapland, where a reintroduction scheme is underway. It was consorting with wintering Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis*, even though these Solway birds are presumed to breed in Svalbard, some way from Swedish Lapland. We know where it came from, but not how it arrived in Scotland. Since it came from a reintroduced population, it does not appear in the BBRC statistics.

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*

North American and East Siberian race *B. b. nigricans* (1, 114, 14)

Essex Tollesbury, 19th February (A. W. Shearring). South Woodham Ferrers, 25th February (A. W. Shearring); 30th December to 2001 (A. W. Shearring *et al.*).
Hampshire See 1999 Hampshire below.
Kent Motney Hill, 1st-2nd October (C. G. Bradshaw, N. F. Willis).
Lincolnshire Holbeach Marsh, 26th March (A. H. J. Harrop). Cleethorpes area, 9th November to at least January 2001, two, 18th November, photo. (D. Hursthouse, P. Palmer, T. Rogers *et al.*).
Norfolk Cley, Salthouse and Kelling area, two, 5th to at least 6th January (R. B. & S. C. Votier *et al.*); present since December 1999 to at least 19th February, photo. Cley, two, 29th December to 2001 (S. C. Votier *et al.*). Scolt Head/Brancaster Harbour, 15th to at least 31st October (N. M. Lawton *et al.*). Titchwell, 2nd January to 6th April (D. Miller *et al.*); presumed returning 1999 individual (*Brit. Birds* 93: 520). Lynn Point, 29th October (A. D. Collins); presumed returning individual of 24th January 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 520).
Suffolk Falkenham Marshes, 8th, 26th December (P. Broad, J. H. Grant *et al.*). Kirton Marshes, 22nd December (M. G. Ferris).
Sussex, West West Wittering, 17th-22nd January, probably since 13th (B. F. Forbes, D. I. Smith, E. D. Urquhart *et al.*); possibly same as Pilsey Island, 8th October to 4th November 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 520).
1999 Essex Rainham Marsh, 13th November (K. Barrett, K. Noble, B. E. Wright); same as Dartford Marsh, Kent, 13th (*Brit. Birds* 93: 519).
1999 Hampshire Farlington Marshes, 13th November to 18th February 2000, photo. (J. Crook *et al.*).
1999 Norfolk Burnham Deepdale, 13th December (T. C. Lowe); presumed same as Holkham Marsh, 20th-23rd November (*Brit. Birds* 93: 520). Cley, Salthouse and Kelling area, see Norfolk above.
IRELAND
Down The Maltings, Strangford Lough, 28th October to 5th November (per NIBA).
1998 Wexford Tacumshin, 31st January; same, Rosslare Backstrand, early April to 18th April (*Irish Birds* 6: 384).

(Arctic North America and East Siberia; winters USA and East Asia) Another big year for this usually distinctive race. Taxonomic uncertainties and the presence of non-typical birds showing some, but not all, of the features of *B. b. nigricans* continue to be a problem. One such record in Norfolk in 1998, which was referred to in last year's report as a bird showing a reduced neckband, is now considered to be unacceptable (J. Martin, *Brit. Birds* in prep.). Such birds are difficult to deal with, but, in order to try to establish a degree of consistency, our approach is usually to accept only those individuals showing the full suite of identification features. It is possible that some intermediate-looking birds may, in fact, have a perfect pedigree for *nigricans*, but BBRC will generally err on the side of caution when dealing with races, such as this, where intergrades are possible. As with a number of the larger, more common and long-staying rarities, it can also be difficult to establish with certainty the real number of individuals involved.

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* (15, 40, 6)

Hampshire Lepe, adult, 24th-26th September (D. H. Taylor *et al.*); same, Langstone Harbour, 26th (J. Crook).
Moray & Nairn Near Kinloss, 21st-31st October (R. F. Hewitt *et al.*).
Norfolk Wells and Holkham, first-winter, 27th January to 25th March, photo. (J. V. Bhalerao *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plate 92). Egmere and West Barsham area, adult, 27th December to 2001, photo.

(A. I. Bloomfield, J. R. McCallum, Miss E. Russell *et al.*).

Suffolk Landguard, age uncertain, 17th January (N. Odin); possibly same as Southwold below. Southwold, adult, 7th-15th January, photo. (B. J. Small *et al.*); same, Lound, 20th-21st (A. Easton *et al.*).

1978 Kent Westbere/Sturry, 21st-23rd October (*Brit. Birds* 72: 513), now considered probably of captive origin.

1998 Cleveland Dorman's Pool, 7th January (*Brit. Birds* 92: 563), now considered same as Tophill Low and Nosterfield, East Yorkshire (*Brit. Birds* 93: 520), and probably of captive origin.

(West Siberia; winters Southeast Europe) Not usually a taxing identification problem, the key issue with this species is more often assessing the origin of those reported. The suggestion that the bird in Kent in 1978 was probably of captive origin was only recently put to this committee by the Kent Ornithological Society. We often rely heavily on local knowledge for guidance in such cases. Notwithstanding these comments, Red-breasted Goose is always a superb creature, wherever it comes from.

American Wigeon *Anas americana* (22, 394, 29)

Angus & Dundee Montrose Basin, ♂, intermittently, 12th February to 23rd March (H. Bell, R. D. Goater, B. Hershell *et al.*); returning 1999 individual, see 1999 Angus & Dundee below.

Argyll Add Estuary, ♂, 30th April (J. Dickson); presumed same, Loch Craignish, at least 8th October (F. & J. Dickson), and Add Estuary/Loch Crinan area, 27th (J. Halliday per P. Daw); presumed returning 1998 Loch Craignish individual (*Brit. Birds* 92: 563).

Caernarfonshire Foryd Bay, ♂, intermittently, 22nd August to 22nd October, photo. (S. Hughes-Roberts *et al.*); presumed same, Conwy, 23rd-26th August (I. Higginson *et al.*); presumed returning individual (*Brit. Birds* 93: 520).

Caernarfonshire/Meirionnydd Porthmadog area, ♂, 21st August to 15th September, photo. (E. Lewis *et al.*).

Ceredigion See 1999 Ceredigion below.

Cleveland Cowpen Marsh and Saltholme Pools, ♀, 6th-7th May (R. C. Taylor *et al.*).

Cornwall Hayle, ♂, since 21st October 1999 to 23rd March, photo. (*Brit. Birds* 93: 520).

Cumbria Bowness-on-Solway, ♂, 9th-10th November (D. G. H. & M. West *et al.*).

Devon Roadford Reservoir, ♂, 15th September (J. Tidball).

Gloucestershire Slimbridge, ♂, 27th December (D. B. Paynter *et al.*).

Kent Elmley, ♀, 20th April to 4th May, paired with ♂ Eurasian Wigeon *A. penelope* (J. A. Rowlands *et al.*).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Leighton Moss, ♂, 8th May, photo. (S. J. Dodgson, K. Kellett); presumed same, Marshside Marsh, 9th-15th (P. Colborn *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Marston, ♂, 6th-7th April, photo. (A. C. Lees *et al.*).

Moray & Nairn Lossie Estuary, ♂, since 24th December 1999 to 6th March; presumed same, 11th November to 2001; returning individual of 20th January 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 521) (R. Proctor *et al.*).

Norfolk Berney Marshes, ♂, 30th September (P. R. Allard, J. R. Rowe); presumed same as 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 521).

Northeast Scotland Slains Pools and Meikle Loch, ♂, 9th October to 1st November (P. Shepherd *et al.*).

Northumberland Druridge Bay, first-summer ♂, intermittently, 7th-17th May, photo. (plate 256); same, Hauxley, 10th, 20th; same, Cresswell Pond, 27th May to 18th June (I. Fisher, M. Scott *et al.*); presumed same, 24th September (M. S. Hodgson per I. Fisher).

Orkney Backsskaill Loch, Papa Westray, ♂, 25th April (J. Davidson, the late J. Mason, R. Rendall). Loch of Tankerness and Mill Sound, ♂, since 11th November 1999 to 6th March (*Brit. Birds* 93: 522). Loch of Suckquoy, ♂, since 24th November 1999 to 21st March (*Brit. Birds* 93: 522).

Outer Hebrides Ardmore and Loch Bee area, South Uist, ♂, 10th October to at least 12th February 2001 (B. Rabbitts, A. Stevenson *et al.*).

Shetland Brow Marsh and Loch of Brow, ♂, 3rd-7th May (Dr R. Riddington *et al.*). Loch of Troswickness, Dunrossness, ♂, 30th May (M. Mellor, H. C. Towll); possibly same as Loch of Brow.

Loch of Spiggie, ♂, 16th-17th September (P.V. Harvey, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*). Loch of Hillwell, ten: four ♂♂, two ♀♀, two first-winter ♂♂, two first-winter ♀♀, 9th October, nine until 10th, eight to 14th, four to 16th, three to 28th, when joined by additional first-winter ♂; four present to 5th November, then three to end of year; also seen at Loch of Spiggie and Scatness (P. M. Ellis *et al.*).

Somerset Sutton Bingham Reservoir, ♂, 4th February to 19th March, photo. (M. A. Hallet, B. J. Matthews, B. J. Widden *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere, first-winter ♂, 10th January to 17th April (M. L. Cornish, D. Fairhurst *et al.*).

1998 Oxfordshire Otmoor, ♀, 23rd February (J. S. Baker).

1998 Yorkshire, South Bawtry, ♂, 5th April (J. Wozencroft); same as Idle Stop, Nottinghamshire, 8th March to 17th April (*Brit. Birds* 92: 563).

1999 Angus & Dundee Montrose Basin, ♂, 3rd-16th January; possibly same, 26th September to 7th October (*Brit. Birds* 93: 520), now presumed same. See also Angus & Dundee above.

1999 Ceredigion Tregaron, ♂, 25th December to 17th March 2000 (H.A. Williams *et al.*).

1999 Cheshire Inner Marsh Farm, ♂, 7th to at least 23rd May (M. R. Miles *et al.*).

1999 Dorset The Fleet, ♂, 7th October to at least 14th November (S.A. Groves *et al.*); presumed returning 1999 individual (*Brit. Birds* 93: 520).

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Down Hillsborough Lake, ♂, 26th February to 17th March (per NIBA).

1998 Cork Rostellan, first-winter ♂, 9th February to 30th March. Douglas Estuary, first-winter ♂, 22nd February to 30th March. Ballycotton, ♂, 13th November to 12th December. (*Irish Birds* 6: 384)

1998 Donegal Blanket Nook, ♂, 14th-15th November, presumed returning individual. Castlewray, ♂, 14th November. (*Irish Birds* 6: 384)

1998 Galway Rostaff, ♂, 5th-10th April (*Irish Birds* 6: 384).

1998 Wexford Tacumshin, ♂, 8th-11th February. North Slob, ♂, 1st-28th November, presumed returning individual. (*Irish Birds* 6: 384)

1998 Wicklow Broadlough, ♂, since 21st December 1997 to 16th January (*Brit. Birds* 92: 564; *Irish Birds* 6: 292); same, Newcastle, 17th-18th January. Broadlough, ♂, 5th December to 21st January 1999. (*Irish Birds* 6: 384)

(North America; winters USA and Central America). The persistently strong showing, continued in 2000, particularly with the flock of ten in Shetland in October, demonstrates why, from 1st January 2002, this species will no longer be considered by BBRC (see *Brit. Birds* 94: 290).



Ian Fisher

256. First-summer male American Wigeon *Anas americana*, Druridge Bay, Northumberland, May 2000.

Black Duck *Anas rubripes* (1, 29, 1)

Cornwall Stithians Reservoir, ♂, since 4th October 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: plate 73, 522), intermittently to end of year, photo. (per K. A. Wilson); same, Loe Pool, 1st September (D. Wood). Hannafore Point, Looe, ♂, 29th May to 4th June (D. Clegg *et al.*); same as 1999 below. Colliford Reservoir, ♂, 7th February (per K.A.Wilson); same as 1999 below.
Devon Slapton Ley, first-winter ♂, intermittently to 26th March; same, Beesands Ley, 26th-27th February (R. Normand *et al.*); same as Bowcombe Creek, Kingsbridge Estuary, 29th October to 8th November 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 522).
Scilly Tresco, ♂, 2nd December to at least 25th February 2001, photo., found dead, 17th March (R. L. Flood *et al.*).
1999 Cornwall Hannafore Point, Looe, ♂, 23rd May to 4th July, photo. (M. K. Ahmad *et al.*); presumed same as Colliford Reservoir. Colliford Reservoir, ♂, 17th-21st January, intermittently to 16th February, 29th October to 29th November (*Brit. Birds* 93: 522), full autumn dates 7th July to at least 31st December.
IRELAND
1998 Kerry Barrow Harbour, ♂, 16th August to 5th December, presumed returning 1997 individual (*Brit. Birds* 92: 231; *Irish Birds* 6: 385).
1998 Wexford Tacumshin, ♂, 15th-16th November (*Irish Birds* 6: 385).

(North America) The presence of long-staying individuals and possible hybrids is beginning to cloud the true status of this species in Britain. One record, that of a well-watched female in Highland, illustrates the potential problems. This individual showed some orange on the bill, and expert advice from North America stated that this is a strong indicator of some degree of hybridisation. We have not accepted this individual, which otherwise appeared to be a strong contender for a genuine record. Similar problems occur in Cornwall, where the number of records of apparently pure-bred birds is difficult enough to establish without the additional problem of identifying hybrids.

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* (19, 236, 9)

Carmarthenshire Penclacwydd, ♀, 12th-26th March (S. L. & P. R. Murray, R. H. A. Taylor *et al.*).
Cumbria Walney Island, ♂, 1st July (C. Raven *et al.*).
Essex Hanningfield Reservoir, ♂, since 9th September 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 522), to 22nd January.
Hertfordshire Wilstone Reservoir, ♂, 17th February (R. Hiller).
Norfolk King's Fen, ♂, 3rd-16th May (P. J. Heath, A. J. Kane). Titchwell, ♂, 4th-10th July, 9th-19th August, photo. (J. V. Bhalerao *et al.*). Cley, ♂, 19th August to 5th September, photo. (V. J. Hanlon, A. Palmer *et al.*).
Nottinghamshire Lound, ♂, 26th-28th April, photo., (P. Palmer *et al.*); presumed same as East Yorkshire below.
Scilly Tresco, first-winter ♂, 16th October (D. Page *et al.*); present 10th-27th, photo.
Staffordshire Blithfield Reservoir, ♂, 6th August to 8th September (A. Buton, E. S. Clare *et al.*).
Yorkshire, East Saltmarsh Delph, ♂, 1st May, photo. (B. H. Greenacre *et al.*); also in Nottinghamshire.
IRELAND
1998 Donegal New Lough, Dunfanaghy, ♂, 15th October to 17th November (*Irish Birds* 6: 385).
1998 Wexford Tacumshin, ♂, ♀, 31st January to 12th February; ♂, 21st September to 4th November (*Irish Birds* 6: 385).

(North America; winters south to Brazil) In Norfolk, the Titchwell and Cley birds differed in that the latter had half of its right leg missing.

Canvasback *Aythya valisineria* (0, 2, 2)

Cornwall Par Beach Pool, ♂, 19th April (S. M. Christophers).
Essex Abberton Reservoir, ♂, 12th November to 13th February 2001 (A. Kettle *et al.*); presumed returning individual last noted 15th February 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 523).
Kent Lade, Dungeness, ♂, 29th January intermittently to 14th March, photo. (C. Gibbard *et al.*);

presumed same, 18th November to 2001, photo. (J. E. Tilbrook *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plate 96).
1999 Kent Monks' Wall, ♂, 28th May (G. J. A. Burton, F. Solly *et al.*).

(Western North America; winters Southwest Canada, USA and Mexico) The male in Essex was back again, seemingly different from the one in Kent. The short-staying male on the Cornish coast was a real surprise, though.

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* (-, 247, 14)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, ♀, 22nd March to 15th April; presumed same, 23rd June to 10th July (R. M. Andrews, J. P. Martin *et al.*).
Berkshire Burghfield Gravel-pits, ♀, 9th January (T. G. Ball), presumed same as 1999 Berkshire below; ♂, 29th December and in 2001 (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*).
Cambridgeshire Fen Drayton Gravel-pits, ♂, 10th December (Dr M. G. Telfer *et al.*); same, intermittently, 23rd December to 1st January 2001; presumed same as 1999 Cambridgeshire bird below and Welney, Norfolk, below.
Dorset Morden Lake, ♂, since 20th December 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 523), to 13th February, returning 23rd November to at least 23rd December; also at Lulworth Lake, 27th-28th September (per S. Robson).
Essex Abberton Reservoir, ♂, 17th October (R. Allen, G. Bond, D. Rhymes).
Greater London Kempton Park, ♂, 22nd May (A. Quinn).
Greater Manchester Chorlton Water Park, ♀, 14th November (P. L. Hines *et al.*).
Hampshire Allington Gravel-pits, ♂, 19th March to 1st April (M. L. Edgeller, D. J. Unsworth).
Lancashire & North Merseyside Marton Mere, ♂, 14th-24th November, photo. (M. Jones, D. J. McGrath, L. J. Ryan *et al.*); same, Fairhaven Marine Lake, 27th November to 2001, photo. (Dr F. Lee *et al.*).
Norfolk Hickling, ♂, 23rd April (P. J. Heath, A. J. Kane). Welney, ♂, intermittently, 18th-30th September, 14th-19th October (J. B. Kemp, C. Mitchell *et al.*); presumed same as Cambridgeshire above.
Somerset Ham Wall, ♀, since 21st November 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 523), to 6th March, returning 14th November to 2001 (per B. D. Gibbs).
Suffolk Minsmere, ♂, 26th-31st January (R. Drew *et al.*).
Sussex, East Rye Harbour, first-winter ♂, 1st, 26th November to 2001 (P. M. Troake *et al.*).
Wiltshire Corsham Lake, ♂, 16th-18th November (J. C. Rolls *et al.*).
1999 Bedfordshire Priory Country Park, first-winter ♂, since 19th November 1998 to 28th February, photo.; ♀, since 15th December 1998 to 1st March, photo. (D. Kramer, D. J. Odell *et al.*).
1999 Berkshire Burghfield Gravel-pits, first-winter ♀, 28th-29th December (C. D. R. Heard, K. E. Moore *et al.*).
1999 Cambridgeshire Mepal, Ouse Washes, first-winter ♂, 16th January to 8th February (J. Oates *et al.*); first recorded Block Fen Gravel-pits, 19th December 1998, Mepal, 20th December 1998.
1999 Hampshire Timsbury Gravel-pits, ♂, 14th November, photo. (D. Philpott); presumed returning first-winter ♂ of 8th December 1998 to 14th February (*Brit. Birds* 93: 523); ♀, 14th November to 26th December, photo. (D. Philpott, D. A. Thelwell).
1999 Hertfordshire Cheshunt South Reservoir, ♀, 1st March (G. White).
1999 Kent Seaton Gravel-pits, ♂, 10th-16th January (N. V. McCanch, B. A. Ryan *et al.*).
IRELAND
Down Lough Money, first-winter ♂, 24th December to 14th January 2001 (per NIBA).

(Eastern Europe to Kazakhstan and Aral Sea region; winters southern Europe and northern Africa east to Indian Subcontinent) Despite the potential for considerable identification difficulties with this species, the acceptance rate is pleasingly high because observers, quite rightly, pay attention to detail. We are aware of another five or so records which remain to be submitted.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (0, 45, 6)

Avon Blagdon Lake, first-winter ♂, 22nd April to 7th May, photo. (N. Milbourne *et al.*); ♀, 22nd October (R. Mielcarek, N. Milbourne, P. Vowles *et al.*).
Cambridgeshire Fen Drayton Gravel-pits, first-winter/first-summer ♀, 24th April to 6th May (J. Oates *et al.*).

Cornwall Drift Reservoir, first-winter ♂, since 22nd November 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 524), to 21st March, photo. (93: plate 125).
Leicestershire Rutland Water, ♀, 8th-23rd April (M. G. Berriman, R. M. Fray *et al.*) (fig. 2).
Orkney Loch of Harray, ♀, 20th February to 30th March (I. Dillon, K. Fairclough, E. R. Meek).
1998 Argyll Ardnave Loch, Islay, first-winter ♀, 6th November to 9th December (*Brit. Birds* 92: 566), presumed same, Loch Gruinart, Islay, 15th December (C. R. McKay per P. Daw); same, Ardnave Loch, to 9th January 1999 (per P. Daw).
1999 Argyll See 1998 Argyll above.
1999 Cambridgeshire St Ives, ♂, ♀, 7th March to 10th April, probably since 29th January (*Brit. Birds* 93: 523); same, Ouse Washes, intermittently 22nd March to 10th April (P. French *et al.*).
1999 Cornwall Loe Pool, first-winter ♂, 15th-24th October (A. Blunden, C. D. R. Heard, J. Young *et al.*); presumed same as Drift Reservoir.
IRELAND
Antrim Stoneyford Reservoir, ♀, 12th December (per NIBA).
1998 Kerry Lough Gill, ♂, 22nd February; presumed returning 1996 individual (*Brit. Birds* 91: 468; *Irish Birds* 6: 69, 385).
1998 Wexford North Slob, first-winter ♀, 25th January to 13th March (*Irish Birds* 6: 386).

(Western North America; winters south and east to Colombia) Some of these records may refer to birds that arrived in the previous year, or even earlier, and are now resident on this side of the Atlantic.



John Wright

Fig. 2. Female Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*, Rutland Water, Leicestershire, April 2000.

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (62, 103, 5)

Argyll North Ledaig, ♂, 8th April to 1st May (J. Coombs *et al.*).

Cornwall Marazion and Penzance, first-winter ♀, 3rd January to 6th April, photo. (S. M. Christophers *et al.*) (plate 257; *Brit. Birds* 93: plate 144).

Fife Tayport, ♂, 24th January (J. Sykes per D. E. Dickson); same, Lucky Scalp, 6th February (D. E. Dickson), 15th November (K. D. Shaw per D. E. Dickson); presumed same as 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 524). Leven, ♀, 19th July to 20th August (J. Sykes *et al.* per D. E. Dickson); presumed same as 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 524).

Moray & Nairn Spey Bay, ♂, 21st April to 20th May (M. J. H. Cook *et al.*); possibly same as Kingston, 19th April 1998 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 525).

Northeast Scotland Ythan Estuary, ♂, 2nd March to 30th September, photo. (A. W. Thorpe *et al.*); presumed same as 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 524-525).

Shetland Eswick, first-winter ♂, 23rd February (M. Heubeck, M. Mellor, Dr J. W. G. Wills); presumed same, as first-summer, Catfirth, 24th April to at least 18th June (P. V. Harvey *et al.*); presumed same, Rova Head, Lerwick, 2nd August to 16th September (J. D. Okill, K. Osborn, I. Sandison *et al.*). Sullom Voe, second-winter ♂, 14th November (P. V. Harvey, M. Heubeck, Dr J. W. G. Wills).

(Circumpolar Arctic) A better year than 1999, with several new arrivals.



Iain H. Leach

257. First-winter female King Eider *Somateria spectabilis*, Marazion, Cornwall, March 2000.

Steller's Eider *Polysticta stelleri* (5, 9, 1)

Moray & Nairn Hopeman, ♀, 16th-18th November, photo. (D. M. Pullan *et al.*) (plate 27).

(Arctic Russia to extreme Northwestern Canada) It has been a very long time since the last Steller's Eider. Following the demise of the long-staying male on the Outer Hebrides back in 1984, the closest we have come was a single wing found on the tideline in Shetland. There are two previous records of females, and one of a female/first-year male.

Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*
North American and East Siberian race *M. n. americana* (0, 6, 0)

1999 Caernarfonshire Llanfairfechan, ♂, 10th March to 8th May, photo. (A. Davies *et al.*).

(Northern Holarctic) The first for some years.

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* (2, 7, 0)

IRELAND

1998 Cork The Gearagh, ♀, 18th January to 8th March (*Irish Birds* 6: 386).

(North America) The first substantiated record for Ireland.

Black Kite *Milvus migrans* (5, 289, 8)

Cornwall Nanjizal, 21st July (J. D. Swann, K. A. Wilson). Nanjizal area and other localities, 23rd August to 7th September, photo., wearing metal ring of unknown origin (I. M. & K.A. Wilson *et al.*).
Kent Stodmarsh, 8th May (C. D. Abrams *et al.*); possibly same, St Margaret's, 8th (P. Wells); possibly same, Dungeness area, 9th, photo. (S. P. Clancy *et al.*).
Sussex, East Hollingdean, Brighton, 16th June (I. J. Whitcomb).
Wiltshire Near Everleigh, adult, 18th-24th July, photo., unidentified wire or fibre on each leg; juvenile, 18th-22nd July, photo. (M. G. Prior *et al.*).
1999 Hampshire Dunberry Hill, Whitsbury, juvenile, 31st August (M. Rafter *et al.*); same, near Rockbourne, 9th September (M. S. Wallen); present in general area, 26th August to 10th September, photo.; presumed same as Redlynch, Wiltshire, 20th August (*Brit. Birds* 93: 526).
1999 Lancashire & North Merseyside Lune Estuary, 19th June (*Brit. Birds* 93: 526), correct observer was J. Carter.
1999 Wiltshire South of Wick Down, 4th September (N. Pleass per R. Turner); same, north of Whitsbury, 9th September (J. Pollard per R. Turner); same as 1999 Hampshire above.
IRELAND
1989 Wexford Duncormick, 21st June (*Irish Birds* 6: 387).

(Most of Eurasia, Africa and Australasia) For the second consecutive summer, long-staying individuals have appeared in the north Hampshire/south Wiltshire area. In 2000, it was an adult with some unknown appendage attached to its legs and which was subsequently joined by a rather smart juvenile. All of this, in combination with another long-stayer carrying a ring in Cornwall, may arouse some suspicion about the origin of certain individuals.

Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* (0, 0, 0)

(Eurasia and Africa) The old record of two over Ashbourne, Derbyshire, has now been reviewed and considered unacceptable by BOURC, and so this species is removed from category B of the British List. One, probably a second-calendar-year individual, was seen and identified on Guernsey, at La Grande Mare, Pleinmont, and La Prevôte, on 24th-27th August, the first for the Channel Islands; also seen at Herm on 27th August, it was first noted on Sark, on 22nd-23rd August. Records from the Channel Islands are not counted in the British statistics, hence the unusual row of zeros above. The sighting of a flock on the coast of the Netherlands in 2001 emphasises that this species is getting ever closer.

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* (100, 617, 15)

Cambridgeshire Fen Drayton Gravel-pits, first-summer ♀, 1st-16th July, photo. (P. Andrews *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plate 257).
Cleveland Hargreaves Quarry, ♀, age uncertain, 9th-10th June (J. B. Dunnett *et al.*).
Derbyshire Crowden, ♀, 29th June to 2nd July, photo. (R. Adderley, A. Robinson, W. M. Underwood *et al.*).
Hampshire Needs Ore Point, ♀, age uncertain, 9th May (M. Rafter). Beaulieu Road, New Forest, ♀, 21st May to 13th June (B. F. Forbes, D. I. Smith *et al.*). Near Alton, ♀, age uncertain, 16th June (J. Eyre, L. Selwyn).
Kent Stodmarsh, ♀, age uncertain, 10th-14th May (G. W. Allison, C. G. Bradshaw *et al.*).
Norfolk Lakenheath Washes, ♀, 14th May (Dr C. Kelly, P. J. Dolton *et al.*). Hickling, ♂, 31st May (T. Barker). Winterton, ♂, 31st May (I. Smith).
Northamptonshire Helidon, first-summer ♀, 26th June (G. Pullan).
Northeast Scotland Duthie Park, Aberdeen, ♀, 16th July (P. A. A. Baxter, C. N. Gibbins).
Nottinghamshire Lound Gravel-pits, ♂, 12th May (C. Forsythe per M. C. Dennis).
Suffolk Suffolk Water Park, ♀, 13th-14th May, photo. (J. Zantboer *et al.*).
Sussex, East Filsham, ♀, age uncertain, 10th May (K. Johnson, I. Standivan *et al.*).
1989 Dorset Hartland Moor, first-summer ♀, 10th-11th June, photo. (M. & the late K. Massey, A. Russell, M. Tuck).

(East Europe to Central Siberia; winters Africa) Another typical year, but, after a majority of males in the previous year, there were considerably more females in 2000.

Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonorae* (0, 4, 0)

1987 Norfolk Hickling, first-summer, 6th July (B. Moore, P.A. J. Morris, R. D. Thomas *et al.*).

(Mediterranean and Northwest African coasts) The belated acceptance of this individual follows the input of expert advice from overseas.

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* (many, 136, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, first- or second-year white-phase, 3rd-16th February (D. N. Shaw *et al.*).

(Circumpolar Arctic) One record from Cornwall remains to be assessed.

Sora Crake *Porzana carolina* (5, 8, 1)

Devon Stover Country Park, Newton Abbot, first-winter, 18th January to 5th April, photo. (B. B. Heasman *et al.*) (plate 258; *Brit. Birds* 93: plate 77).

IRELAND

1998 Wexford Tacumshin, adult, 2nd-4th August, photo. (*Irish Birds* 6: 389).

(North America) The long-staying, co-operative and photogenic individual in Devon was the highlight of the winter for many observers. The timing of the Irish record is not unprecedented; one was trapped on Bardsey in 1981, also in early August.



Iain H. Leach

258. First-winter Sora Crake *Porzana carolina*, Stover Country Park, Devon, January 2000.

Little Crake *Porzana parva* (68, 32, 1)

Kent Dungeness, ♀, 14th May, photo. (J. R. Hunter *et al.*).

(Central and East Europe and West Africa) Five of the last six records have been in spring.

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (98, 226, 2)

Hampshire Pennington Marsh, two, 29th-30th April (C. Allen *et al.*); also in West Sussex.

Norfolk Titchwell area, since 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 528), throughout year, photo. (per G. E. Dunmore).

Sussex, West Sidlesham Ferry, two, 30th April (O. M. Mitchell *et al.*); same as Hampshire above.

(Southern Eurasia, Africa, the Americas and Australasia) The Titchwell resident seems destined to stay for the rest of its days.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* (31, 52, 1)

Scilly St Mary's, 21st-29th April, photo. (M. Anderson, M. S. Scott *et al.*).
1996 Yorkshire, East Hornsea Mere, 4th June (E. J. Hediger, R. Lyon *et al.*); same as Norfolk and other counties 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 90: 468).
1996 Yorkshire, North Muston, 3rd June (G. M. Batten); same as East Yorkshire above.
1999 Norfolk Berney Marshes, 16th-17th June (*Brit. Birds* 93: 529), was 16th-17th May.
(South Europe, Southwest Asia and Africa; winters Africa)

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* (5, 28, 1)

Cumbria Grune Point, 17th August to 3rd September (D. G. H. West *et al.*).
(West Asia; winters Africa)

American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica* (6, 253, 10)

Cleveland Marske, juvenile, 30th September (D. J. Britton).
Cornwall Sennen, juvenile, 1st October (D. E. Balmer, P. M. Wilson *et al.*). Crows-an-Wra, juvenile, 26th-27th October (G. S. Bilbao, S. M. Christophers, C. J. Sparks *et al.*).
Nottinghamshire Sutton-on-Trent, age uncertain, 21st September (S. C. Votier); presumed same, Langford Lowfields, 8th October (J. M. Lewis *et al.*).
Outer Hebrides West Gerinish, South Uist, juvenile, 22nd-25th October, photo. (P. R. Boyer, A. Stevenson). Liniclate, Benbecula, juvenile, 22nd-23rd November (P. R. Boyer, B. J. Hill, B. Rabbitts *et al.*); possibly same as West Gerinish. St Kilda, juvenile, 4th October (A. Robinson).
Scilly St Mary's, first-summer, 30th May to 5th June, photo. (R. L. Flood *et al.*). Tresco, juvenile, 1st November (E. A. Fisher, R. L. Flood).
Shetland Sandness, juvenile, 15th October (P. M. Ellis, P. V. Harvey).
1999 Cornwall Sennen, juvenile, 22nd-24th October (C. D. R. Heard); presumed same as 13th (*Brit. Birds* 93: 529).
1999 Hampshire Keyhaven Marsh area, juvenile, 30th October (R. W. Russell).
1999 Yorkshire, South Old Moor, adult, 26th September (J. Goddard, D. M. Waddington).
IRELAND
1998 Wexford Tacumshin, juvenile, 10th-11th October (*Irish Birds* 6: 389).

(Arctic North America and extreme Northeast Asia; winters South America) The Nottinghamshire bird was discovered during an opportunistic check of a European Golden Plover *P. apricaria* flock, which the observer noticed while on a long car journey.

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (3, 46, 5)

Argyll Vaul, Tiree, adult, 12th October (A. J. Leitch).
Cumbria Grune Point, adult, 5th-9th August, photo. (M. Sargent, D. G. H West *et al.*).
Essex Old Hall Marshes, first-summer, 7th May (C. J. Mackenzie-Grieve, N. J. Ransdale, A. Thompson *et al.*).
Shetland Fair Isle, juvenile, 2nd-12th October, probably since 28th September (A. J. Bull, D. N. Shaw *et al.*).
Yorkshire, East Brough Haven, adult, 6th-25th July (R. Lyon *et al.*) (plate 259; *Brit. Birds* 93: plates 232 & 233).
IRELAND
1993 Cork Ballycotton, adult, 8th



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259. Adult Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* with European Golden Plover *P. apricaria*, Brough Haven, East Yorkshire, July 2000.

August (*Irish Birds* 6: 389).

(North and Northeast Asia, and Alaska; winters southern Asia, Australasia and western North America) This species is now almost an annual visitor to Britain. Grune Point enjoyed a good August; no sooner had the Pacific Golden Plover departed than a Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* arrived.

American/Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica/fulva* (0, 325, 15)

1999 Cleveland Greenabella Marsh, adult, 22nd August (B. Beck, J. Regan, R. C. Taylor).
1999 Cornwall Predannack, adult, 9th-10th October (A. R. Pay).
1999 Yorkshire, West Knottingley, adult, 12th December (M. Askew, D. J. Bacon).
IRELAND
1998 Wicklow Kilcoole, adult, 23rd May (*Irish Birds* 6: 389).

From the beginning of 2002, BBRC will no longer consider 'either/or' species records for some groups, such as this, except in cases where the identification criteria are uncertain or impossible to establish in field conditions (*Brit. Birds* 94: 395). For the sake of completeness, we shall continue to publish any outstanding records from before this date.

Sociable Lapwing *Vanellus gregarius* (5, 36, 1)

Suffolk Dingle Marshes and Minsmere, first-winter, 22nd-24th October, photo. (W. J. Brame *et al.*); presumed same, Aldeburgh, 19th-20th November (per D. F. Walsh).
IRELAND
1998 Offaly Shannon Harbour, 18th December (*Irish Birds* 6: 389).

(Southeast Russia and Western Central Asia; winters Northeast Africa and Southwest Asia) The bird in Co. Offaly is Ireland's fourth.

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* (2, 110, 2)

Somerset Burnham-on-Sea, juvenile, 16th-18th September (A. Pugsley, A. M. Slade *et al.*).
Sussex, East Rye Harbour, adult, 11th-29th August, photo. (S. Smith, P. M. Troake *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plate 262).
1999 Dumfries & Galloway Port Logan, juvenile, 18th-23rd September, photo. (B. Orr *et al.*).
1999 Yorkshire, East Easington Lagoons, juvenile, 17th September (A. C. Garvey, M. J. Hobbs).
IRELAND
1998 Cork Ballycotton, juvenile, 10th-20th September; another, 13th-20th (*Irish Birds* 6: 389).
1998 Waterford Cunnigar, juvenile, 27th September (*Irish Birds* 6: 389).
1999 Down Belfast Lough, juvenile, 13th-20th August; another, 8th-21st September (per NIBA).

(North America; winters Central and South America) After the bonanza in the Hebrides in 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 530-531), there was a return to form for this species in 2000.

Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis* (0, 5, 1)

Shetland Pool of Virkie, adult, 18th-21st July, photo. (Dr R. Riddington *et al.*).
IRELAND
1998 Cork Ballycotton, 2nd-5th July, photo. (*Irish Birds* 6: 389).

(Siberia; winters Southeast Asia and Australia) Late July or early August is the time to find one of these, but there is no predicting where.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* (6, 32, 0)

IRELAND
1998 Dublin Rogerstown Estuary, juvenile, 12th-25th September, photo. (*Irish Birds* 6: 391).

(North America; winters southern USA, Central and South America)

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis* (24, 111, 23)

Argyll Loch Gruinart, Islay, adult, 13th August (Dr T. ap Rheinallt *et al.*).
Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes, adult, intermittently, 6th-9th September (D. Griffiths, J. Oates *et*

al.); same as Welney, Norfolk.
Cornwall Hayle, juvenile, 15th-26th October, photo. (S. F. Elton *et al.*).
Dorset Lodmoor, juvenile/first-winter, 14th-15th October (G. F. & S. Barlow, S. Robson *et al.*).
Kent Elmley, adult, 5th-9th August (P. R. Alfrey, G. W. Allison). Grove Ferry, juvenile, 15th October (N. V. McCanch).
Norfolk Cley, adult, 19th-22nd August (M. I. Eldridge, A. J. L. Smith *et al.*). Welney, adult, intermittently, 1st-18th September, photo. (J. B. Kemp, C. Mitchell, D. Stevens *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plate 261); also in Cambridgeshire.
Northeast Scotland Slains Pools, Collieston, juvenile, 21st-29th October (the late W. R. Brackenridge, A. Webb *et al.*). Annachie Lagoon, juvenile, 22nd October (D. J. G. Gill, A. Rigg, A. Webb *et al.*); not same as Slains Pools.
Orkney Braebuster/St Peter's Pool area, adult, 22nd-23rd July (I. Dillon, K. E. Hague). North Ronaldsay, adult, 25th-26th July (P.A. Brown, R. McGregor *et al.*).
Outer Hebrides Loch Paible, North Uist, adult, 23rd-25th September (B. Rabbitts). Near Balgarva, South Uist, adult, 9th-24th September (P. Amies, B. Rabbitts, A. Stevenson *et al.*). Clachan/South Ford area, South Uist, juvenile, 7th-8th October; presumed same, West Gerinish, South Uist, 11th-15th (G. Evans, A. Stevenson *et al.*). Near West Gerinish, South Uist, adult, 10th-15th October (B. Rabbitts, A. Stevenson *et al.*). St Kilda, adult, 9th-11th September; juvenile, 5th-9th October (A. Robinson).
Scilly St Agnes, adult, 28th September to 5th October (R. J. McCann, D. Page, N. Wheatley *et al.*). Bryher, juvenile, 24th October (D. S. Flumm, L. Lock).
Shetland Pool of Virkie and Scord, adult, 13th July (M. Maher, Dr R. Riddington, S. C. Votier *et al.*).
Yorkshire, East Kilnsea, adult, 5th-6th August, photo. (J.A. Rowlands, R. I. Thorpe *et al.*).
1999 Cornwall Stithians Reservoir, juvenile, 23rd October (*Brit. Birds* 93: 531), first-named observer was D. Eva of Cornwall, not D. P. Eva of Shetland.
IRELAND
Londonderry Lough Beg, juvenile, 23rd October to 18th November; another, 30th October only (per NIBA).
1996 Cork Ballycotton, juvenile, 26th September (*Irish Birds* 6: 391).
1998 Wexford Tacumshin, adult, 26th July to 12th August (*Irish Birds* 6: 391).

(Northern North America; winters southern South America) In the Outer Hebrides, the multiple Semipalmated Sandpipers *C. pusilla* of September 1999 were replaced by a flurry of White-rumped Sandpipers in 2000. The Yorkshire bird had the good sense to time its visit to Kilnsea to coincide with the BBRC summer meeting at the same venue.

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* (5, 221, 3)

Devon Dawlish Warren, adult, 8th August (J. E. Fortey, K. Rylands *et al.*).
Gwent Goldcliff Pools, juvenile, 3rd-13th October (J. O'Sullivan *et al.*).
Hampshire Hayling Oysterbeds, Langstone Harbour, adult, 8th May (J. Crook *et al.*).
IRELAND
1998 Dublin Rogerstown, juvenile, 25th September.
1998 Wexford Lady's Island Lake, adult, 15th August; presumed same, Tacumshin, 17th (*Irish Birds* 6: 391).

(North American and northeastern Siberia; winters South America)

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* (5, 20, 1)

Shetland Scatness and Pool of Virkie, adult, 27th August to 1st September (P. V. Harvey, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*).

(Northeast Siberia; winters New Guinea and Australia) The second highly sought-after eastern wader to be recorded at the Pool of Virkie in little more than a month (see also Red-necked Stint *C. ruficollis*, above). Just to prove the pedigree of the area, this is not the first record of this sandpiper from Scatness.

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (23, 189, 3)

Devon Dawlish Warren, 13th-30th May, photo. (J. E. Fortey *et al.*).

Northeast Scotland Ythan Estuary, 3rd-6th May, photo. (C. N. Gibbins *et al.*).
Yorkshire, South Rother Valley Country Park, 6th July (R. Greasley *et al.*).
IRELAND
1998 Clare Shannon Airport Lagoon, 27th April (*Irish Birds* 6: 393).
(North Eurasia; winters Asia and Australasia)

Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus* (1, 27, 0)

IRELAND
1989 Wexford Tacumshin, juvenile/first-winter, 22nd-29th October (*Irish Birds* 6: 393).
(North America; winters Mexico to South America) *Irish Birds* has commented that this appears to be the first Western Palearctic record of a bird in juvenile/first-winter plumage.

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (180, 109, 2)

Shetland Fair Isle, 22nd September (H. E. Maggs *et al.*), presumed same, 24th, photo. (K. Holland *et al.*). Isbister, Whalsay, 2nd October (J. L. Irvine, M. Williamson *et al.*).
(Northeast Europe and Northwest Asia; winters Africa)

Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus* (0, 2, 0)

1999 Cleveland Greenabella Marsh and Greatham Creek area, juvenile, 29th September to at least 30th October, photo. (B. Beck, R. C. Taylor *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plates 270 & 271); same as Northeast Scotland below.
1999 Northeast Scotland Rosehearty, juvenile, 11th-24th September, photo. (P. S. Crockett, I. Gordon, D. M. Pullan, J. Smith *et al.*) (plate 260).
(North America) Following an individual in Ireland in 1985, this was a long-awaited and, ultimately, a long-staying first for Great Britain. Many of those who travelled from England to see it in Northeast Scotland may have felt a little aggrieved that it subsequently followed them south. As the photographs show, it did give excellent views at times. This bird was a juvenile, which is undoubtedly the easiest plumage in which to separate this species from Long-billed Dowitcher *L. scolopaceus*. Nevertheless, even in this plumage, identification is not so straightforward as it may at first seem, and attention to detail is still required. This individual had one missing tertial on its left wing and an identical pattern of markings on the juvenile tertials, scapulars and coverts.



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260. Juvenile Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus grisens*, Rosehearty, Northeast Scotland, September 1999.

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (9, 212, 4)

Dorset Middleberc, Poole Harbour, juvenile/first-winter, 7th-11th Novcmber (H. G. Wood Homer *et al.*).

Kent Elmley, adult, 8th-29th April, 30th July to 11th August, photo. (per C. G. Bradshaw); samc as 1999 below.

Lancashire & North Merseyside Seaforth, juvenile, 17th-28th October; juvenile/first-wintcr, 28th October to 5th April 2001 at least, photo. (L. Jones, S. J. White *et al.*).

Northeast Scotland Ythan Estuary, adult, 4th-16th August, photo. (F. M. & M. A. Sullivan *et al.*).

1999 Kent Elmley, 31st March to 28th April; same, Oare Marshes, 15th July to 24th August (*Brit. Birds* 93: 533), also Funton Crcek, Medway, 3rd October, Elmley, 31st October, 25th November (J. A. Rowlands).

IRELAND

Antrim North Foreshore Tip, adult, 19th February; also in Down (per NIBA).

Down Belfast Lough, adult, 9th April; samc as Antrim; same as 1999 Down below (per NIBA).

1998 Cork Ballycotton, juvenile, 7th Novcmber to 20th March 1999 (*Irish Birds* 6: 393).

1998 Wexford Tacumshin, juvcnile, 29th Scptcmber to 18th October, also in 1999 below. The Cull, two juveniles, 18th October to 15th April 1999; another juvenile, 3rd December to 18th February 1999; presumed same as Tacumshin (*Irish Birds* 6: 393).

1998 Wicklow Broadlough, juvenile, 20th-28th September (*Irish Birds* 6: 393).

1999 Cork See 1998 Cork abovc.

1999 Down Belfast Lough, adult, 7th July to 3rd December (pcr NIBA); also in 2000 above.

1999 Wexford Tacumshin, 3rd-18th April, presumed same as 1998 above (*Irish Birds* 6: 393). The Cull, see 1998 Wexford above.

(North America and Northeast Siberia; winters USA and Central America) The bird in Kent has now been present since 1998.

Long-billed/Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus/griseus* (18, 309, 5)

Norfolk Berney Marshes, 7th May (P. R. Allard, K. R. Dye).

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*
North American race *N. p. hudsonicus* (2, 2, 1)

Gwent Goldcliff Pools, 6th-7th May, video., photo. (S. D. Bosanquet *et al.*).

(North America) The first record of this race since one at Tacumshin, Co. Wexford, in September 1980 (*Brit. Birds* 77: 524), and the fifth for Britain & Ireland. No doubt some slip through undetected, but this bird demonstrated that the features separating this race from the Whimbrels which we see in wcstcrn Europe (*N. p. phaeopus*) extend to more than just a dark rump (*Birding World* 13: 190-193).

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (12, 100, 4)

Dorset Stanpit Marsh, 10th-15th April, photo. (I. Prophet *et al.*).

Essex Vangc Marsh, adult, 15th-16th August (S. Arlow, P. M. Griggs *et al.*).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Seaforth, adult, 22nd July, photo. (I. Simms *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: platc 236).

Sussex, West Sidlesham Ferry, 23rd April (T. A. & M. A. Guyatt *et al.*).

1999 Kent Monks' Wall, juvenile, 7th-30th August, photo. (J. R. Hunter *et al.*); presumed same as Sandwich Bay, 13th (*Brit. Birds* 93: 533).

1999 Yorkshire, West Astley Lake, New Swillington Ings, 3rd August (*Brit. Birds* 93: 534), second-namcd observer was A. Robertshaw. Fairburn Ings, three juveniles, 3rd-5th August (V. Parslow *et al.*); prcsumed same as Astley Lake.

(Southcast Europc, west and cast Asia; winters Africa, southern Asia and Australasia)

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* (12, 25, 0)

Outer Hebrides Loch Mor, Benbecula, 2nd Novcmber 1999 to at least 9th March (*Brit. Birds* 93: 534), last noted Loch Bail'Fhionnlaidh, 7th May.

(North America; winters USA south to southern South America) This is the first record of wintering by this species in Britain, although one spent the winter of 1982/83 in Co. Kerry (*Brit. Birds* 77: 526).

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (35, 259, 6)

Argyll Ulva Lagoon, near Tayvallich, juvenile/first-winter, 30th September to 11th October, photo. (J. Dickson, C. Pollock *et al.*).
Carmarthenshire Laugharne, first-winter, 12th November to at least 18th April 2001, photo. (T. Freeman, M. Humphreys *et al.*).
Cornwall Loe Pool, juvenile, 24th September (R. C. Loader *et al.*); present 23rd-28th, photo.
Dorset Butterstreet Cove, 7th-19th May, photo. (M. Gilbert, G. Walbridge *et al.*).
Northumberland Seaton Burn, near Wideopen, juvenile/first-winter, 4th-19th October, photo. (G. Bowman, A. J. Johnson, D. Smart *et al.*) (plate 261; *Brit. Birds* 93: plate 351).
Yorkshire, North Filey Dams, juvenile, 17th October, video. (K. & N. P. Senior *et al.*).
1998 Essex East Tilbury, first-winter, 27th December to 21st March 1999, photo. (J. A. Alderston, B. Holwell *et al.*).
1999 Angus & Dundee Monikie, adult, 26th July to 2nd August, photo. (S. R. Green, R. McCurley, G. M. Smith *et al.*).
1999 Essex See 1998 Essex above.
1999 Hampshire Pennington Marsh, 5th-9th May (P. Winter, R. B. Wynn *et al.*).
1999 Kent Cliffe, first-summer, intermittently, 17th March to 12th April (F. Cackett, P. Larkin, J. Warne *et al.*); same as Essex above.
1999 Lothian Tyninghame, juvenile, 26th September to 10th October (I. J. Andrews, M. S. Cavanagh *et al.*).
1999 Northumberland Lindisfarne, age uncertain, 4th September (I. Kerr).
IRELAND
1998 Clare Poulnasherry Bay, 13th September; same, Kilrush Marina, 4th-5th October; same, Knock, Shannon Estuary, 12th December (*Irish Birds* 6: 393).
1998 Cork Near Macroom, 1st-14th February. Kinsale Marsh, juvenile, 9th-10th October. (*Irish Birds* 6: 393)
1998 Kerry Akeragh Lough, 19th September to 5th October (*Irish Birds* 6: 393).



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261. Juvenile/first-winter Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes*, Seaton Burn, Northumberland, October 2000.

1998 Louth Dundalk Docks, adult, since 13th July 1997 to 24th May (*Brit. Birds* 92: 577; *Irish Birds* 6: 297).

1998 Wexford Lady's Island Lake, juvenile, 11th October (*Irish Birds* 6: 393).

(North America; winters southern USA, Central and South America) A relatively quiet year for this species, but a return to a more typical pattern of arrivals, predominantly in autumn, compared with last year's rush of spring birds.



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262. First-winter Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*, St Mary's, Scilly, September 2000.

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* (6, 23, 1)

Scilly St Mary's and Tresco, first-winter, 22nd September to 21st October, photo. (D. Page, K. Webb *et al.*) (plate 262; *Brit. Birds* 93: plate 346).

(North America; winters Central and South America) This will be remembered as one of the rarities of the year, since it remained on Scilly long enough to be enjoyed at close quarters by many people. September arrivals are very much the norm.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (3, 54, 1)

Lancashire & North Merseyside Seaforth, 9th June, photo. (C. Gregson *et al.*) (plate 263; *Brit. Birds* 93: plate 216).

(Northeast Europe and Siberia; winters Africa, south Asia and Australasia) There were five spring records last year and another this year. Late April to early June is the best time to look for this species.



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263. Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus*, Seaforth, Merseyside, June 2000.

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularia* (6, 124, 1)

Derbyshire Chatsworthy Park, adult, 30th May (T. Hobson, C. Jackson, R. W. Key *et al.*).
1998 Cumbria South Walney, age uncertain, 27th September (C. Raven *et al.*).

(North America; winters USA south to Uruguay) The single record makes 2000 the worst year since 1972, when there was none.

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (1, 280, 0)

1999 Yorkshire, East Blacktoft Sands, juvenile/first-winter, 2nd October, photo. (J. T. Harriman, F. X. Moffatt); probably same, 9th-13th, photo. (G. E. Dobbs, I. H. Leach *et al.*); same as Edderthorpe Flash, 9th October (*Brit. Birds* 93: 536).
IRELAND
1998 Cork Ballycotton, 13th September (*Irish Birds* 6: 393).
1998 Dublin Rogerstown, 11th September (*Irish Birds* 6: 393).
1998 Wexford Tacumshin, ♀, 29th June to 13th July; same, Lady's Island Lake, 5th July. Tacumshin, first-winter, 16th-23rd September; same, Lady's Island Lake, 26th-30th. (*Irish Birds* 6: 393)

(North America; winters South America) The first blank year since 1993.

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* (2, 102, 2)

Kent Dungeness, first-winter, 7th, 12th March (R. E. Turley, D. Walker *et al.*).
Scilly St Mary's, adult, 7th-20th January, photo. (R. J. Hathway, M. S. Scott *et al.*).
1996 Cornwall Maer Lake, Bude, first-summer, 23rd September, photo. (G. P. Sutton).
IRELAND
1998 Cork Cork City Dump, second-winter, 3rd January (*Irish Birds* 6: 394).

(North America and Caribbean; winters USA to South America)

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* (0, 41, 2)

Avon Keynsham, second-winter/second-summer, 10th-11th April (A. H. Davies *et al.*); presumed same as Dorset, Somerset.



Mike Langman

Fig. 3. First-winter Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan*, Torbay, Devon, December 2000.

Devon Clennon Valley, Paignton, first-winter, 16th-19th December, photo. (M. R. A. Bailey *et al.*) (fig. 3); other localities in 2001.
Dorset Radipole and Weymouth Bay area, second-winter, 13th-19th February, intermittently, 26th to 2nd March, photo. (R. Kershaw *et al.*); same, Maiden Castle, Dorchester, 25th February (J. Down per S. Robson), Maiden Newton, Frome Valley, 25th (C. Patrick per S. Robson); also in Avon, Somerset.
Somerset Cheddar Reservoir, second-winter, 16th-22nd March, photo. (T. A. Box, A. M. Slade *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plate 124); presumed same as Avon, Dorset.
IRELAND
1998 Louth Baltray, adult, 11th-21st October (*Irish Birds* 6: 394).

(North America; winters South America) We have yet to receive details of a second-summer that was seen at various localities in the south of England, including Thamesmead, Greater London, where it was photographed.

Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* (11, 108, 6)

Angus & Dundee Lunan Bay, adult, 2nd October (S. R. Green, R. McCurley *et al.*).
Cornwall Drift Reservoir, adult, 11th-17th March (B. Dodd, G. Hobin *et al.*).
Derbyshire Ogston Reservoir and Poolsbrook Country Park, adult, 26th-27th December (R. J. & B. G. Lowe *et al.*).
Devon Teign estuary, first-winter/first-summer, 17th March to 1st May, photo. (M. Knott *et al.*).
Lancashire & North Merseyside Seaforth, first-summer, 24th-25th May, photo. (T. J. Meehan *et al.*).
Oxfordshire Farmoor Reservoir, first-summer, 17th-18th May, photo. (N. J. Hallam *et al.*) (plate 264).
IRELAND
1998 Cork The Lough, 22nd February to 14th March; adult, 27th-28th February (*Irish Birds* 6: 395).

(North America; winters USA to Mexico) After only one in 1999, this is a return to normal service.



Iain H. Leach

264. First-summer Bonaparte's Gull *Larus philadelphia* with Black-headed Gulls *L. ridibundus*, Farmoor Reservoir, Oxfordshire, May 2000.

Slender-billed Gull *Larus genei* (0, 6, 3)

Kent Dungeness, 30th-31st May (P. G. Akers, D. J. R. Hinton *et al.*).
Norfolk Cley, two adults, 5th May, photo. (Mr & Mrs R. Brownsword, B Dawson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plate 185).

(Northwest Africa, southern Europe, Southwest Asia) The Norfolk record is almost a carbon copy of the two there in 1987. What is even more astonishing is that there was only one record of the species in the British Isles between these two events, and that was only in 1999. Dungeness also has one previous record, so six of the nine Slender-billed Gulls recorded in this country have been seen at these two sites. Who says that lightning never strikes twice?

Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*
North American race *L. a. smithsonianus*, 'American Herring Gull' (0, 36, 1)

IRELAND
Londonderry Culmore Tip, second-winter, 7th-8th March (per NIBA).
1998 Cork The Lough, first-winter, since 6th December 1997 to 4th January (*Brit. Birds* 92: 581; *Irish Birds* 6: 302). Cork City Dump, first-winter, 2nd-25th January. The Lough, second-winter, 15th January. (*Irish Birds* 6: 395)
1998 Donegal Killybegs, second-winter, 7th, 22nd March, photo.; different second-winter, 12th April (*Irish Birds* 6: 395).
1998 Dublin Rogerstown, first-winter, 4th May (*Irish Birds* 6: 395).
1998 Waterford Waterford City Dump, second-winter, 3rd January (*Irish Birds* 6: 395).
1999 Antrim Whiteabbey, Belfast Lough, first-winter, 6th November (per NIBA).
1999 Down North Foreshore Tip, Belfast, first-winter, 22nd January (per NIBA).

(North America) A number of records in Great Britain remain under consideration.

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (2, 86, 1)

Shetland Westing, Unst, adult, 9th January, photo. (M. G. & M. J. Pennington *et al.*).
1999 Caithness Wick, adult, 11th February (N. Money *et al.*); present 8th-11th.
1999 Northumberland East Chevington, adult, 9th-10th June (M. J. Carr, R. Dunn, A. S. Jack).
IRELAND
1998 Dublin Dun Laoghaire, adult, 7th January (*Irish Birds* 6: 396).

(Northeast Siberia and Canada) Unst, the northernmost island in Shetland, in early January, would seem to be exactly the right time and place for this species.

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* (76, 45, 2)

Argyll Ardnave Point, Islay, first-winter, 23rd-24th January, photo. (C. Andrews, S. Harris, Dr T. ap Rheinallt *et al.*).
Outer Hebrides North Tolsta, first-winter, 9th January (S. B. Witts per B. Rabbitts); same, Stornoway and Ranish, Lewis, 10th-18th, photo. (P. Cunningham, R. D. Wemyss *et al.*).
IRELAND
1998 Mayo Newport Tip, adult, 31st December (*Irish Birds* 6: 396).

(Arctic) These two records in the northwest could conceivably relate to one individual, but even so they are just reward for the hardy birders who endure long, windy and dark winters in the Western Isles.

Gull-billed Tern *Sterna nilotica* (52, 217, 2)

Outer Hebrides Loch Bee, South Uist, 14th-16th July, photo. (J. K., K. A. & K. D. Shaw *et al.*).
Scilly St Mary's, 10th April (R. L. Flood, P. J. & S. A. Robinson).
1999 Gloucestershire See 1999 Wiltshire below.
1999 Wiltshire Cotswold Water Park, 27th June to 4th July (*Brit. Birds* 93: 538), also in Gloucestershire section of locality.
IRELAND
1998 Cork Courtmacsherry, adult, 26th-27th July; same, Kilbrittain, 8th August (*Irish Birds* 6: 396).

(Almost cosmopolitan, nearest breeding colony is in Denmark; European population winters in Africa) The record from the Outer Hebrides was a particularly notable find, given the location.



Iain H. Leach

265. Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* with Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis*, Cleveland, August 2000.

Caspian Tern *Sterna caspia* (30, 235, 1)

Cleveland Saltholme Pools, Seaton Snook and Bran Sands, 2nd-5th August, photo. (B. Beck, G. Lawlor, R. C. Taylor *et al.*) (plate 265; *Brit. Birds* 93: plate 256).
1998 Leicestershire Rutland Water, 1st August (T. P. Appleton, M. G. Berriman).
1999 Kent Oare Marshes, 11th July (R. O'Reilly).
IRELAND
1998 Cork Ballycotton, 19th-20th June *(Irish Birds* 6: 396).

(Almost cosmopolitan, except South America; European population winters in Africa)

Forster's Tern *Sterna forsteri* (0, 29, 1)

Caernarfonshire Bangor, second-winter, 2nd-18th December, photo. (M. Jones, R. Pritchard, A. White *et al.*) (plate 30).
Essex Hamford Water and Tollesbury Creek area, since 1999 to at least 24th April (*Brit. Birds* 93: 538), to 1st September.
1998 Cornwall Devoran, first-winter, 5th November (C. D. R. Heard, M. May *et al.*).

(North America; winters USA and Mexico) This species breaks all the conventional 'rules' for terns, with winter arrivals and long stays both quite typical. Figures for previous records in Ireland have been adjusted to take account of apparently returning individuals; the new Irish total is eight.

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus* (20, 108, 1)

Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, 4th June, photo. (D. Bywater *et al.*).
1999 Cornwall Hayle, first-winter, 21st October, photo. (I. Kendall, D. J. Rigby, L. P. Williams *et al.*).

(South Eurasia, Africa and Australasia; European population winters Africa) The individual in Cornwall in 1999 was late, but is not the latest ever. Birds in juvenile/first-winter plumage were recorded on very similar dates in Norfolk in 1988 and in Leicestershire/Northamptonshire in 1991.

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*
North American race *C. n. surinamensis* (0, 1, 0)

1999 Avon Weston-super-Mare, juvenile, 3rd-11th October, probably since 2nd, photo. (R. M. Andrews, R. J. Higgins, J. P. Martin *et al.*).

(North America; winters South America) It is perhaps a little surprising that this race has not been recorded before, but it may well have been overlooked.

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (50, 722, 20)

Cambridgeshire Grafham Water, juvenile, 20th September (J. Oates *et al.*).
Cleveland Dorman's Pool, Saltholme Pool and Haverton Hole, adult, 25th June, photo. (J. Regan *et al.*). South Gare, juvenile, 19th September (J. B. Dunnett).
Essex Hanningfield Reservoir, adult, 7th July (N.A. Chambers *et al.*).
Fife Carnbee Reservoir, adult, 5th, 7th June (J. N. Mutch *et al.*).
Gwent Llandegfedd Reservoir, juvenile, 24th September (P.J. Cruttenden *et al.*).
Kent Dungeness, adult, 23rd-25th June (O. J. Leyshon *et al.*); adult, 21st September (D. Walker *et al.*). Grove Ferry, adult, 10th-13th July (M. Snook, D. Willett *et al.*).
Lancashire & North Merseyside Seaforth, adult, 27th May, photo. (A. & A. Wraithmell *et al.*).
Norfolk Cley, adult, 28th May (A. P. Jensen *et al.*). Winterton, adult, 27th July (S. J. Aspinall *et al.*).
Orkney Loch of Rummie, adult, 21st-23rd June (B. Ribbands, E. J. Williams *et al.*). Newark Bay, Deerness, juvenile, 18th-21st November (I. Dillon *et al.*).
Outer Hebrides Lochs Nam Feithean and Paible, North Uist, adult, 8th-15th June (F. Millwood, B. Rabbitts *et al.*).
Shetland Wick of Aith, Fetlar, adult, 19th June (G. & J. Harrison).
Worcestershire Bredon's Hardwick, juvenile, 3rd September (A. Warr *et al.*).
Yorkshire, East Spurn, adult, 28th July (D. P. Boyle, M. G. Stoyle). Tophill Low, juvenile, 15th-19th October, photo. (J. Barker *et al.*).
1996 Warwickshire Draycote Water, adult, 26th July (J. J. Bowley, G. Rowe *et al.*).
1998 Yorkshire, West Dewsbury, juvenile, 11th October, photo. (J. Hamilton).
1999 Lincolnshire North Coates Point, juvenile, 12th September (H. Bunn).
1999 Norfolk Berney Marshes, 5th July (*Brit. Birds* 93: 538), first-named observer was I. Robinson.
1999 Somerset Steart, adult, 13th July (N. E. Wall). Parrett Estuary, Hinckley Point and Meare Heath area, juvenile, intermittently, 19th September to 8th November (*Brit. Birds* 93: 539), initial finder was P. Bowyer.
1999 Yorkshire, East Pulfin Bog, adult, 22nd August, photo. (D. G. Hobson).
1999 Yorkshire, North East Tanfield, adult, 10th August (B. & S. Morland).
1999 Yorkshire, West Fairburn Ings, juvenile, 31st July to 10th August (C. Winn *et al.*).
IRELAND
Down Belfast Lough, adult, 27th August (per NIBA).

(Southeast Europe, Asia and Africa; European population winters Africa) The juvenile in Orkney in November stands out as extraordinary in an otherwise fairly typical set of records. Not only was it a long way north on a very late date, but it was found feeding over a ploughed field, rather than the usual reservoir full of windsurfers.

Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* (2, 33, 1)

Orkney Scapa Flow, freshly dead, 21st December, photo.; now at National Museum of Scotland (I. Dillon *et al.*).

(Circumpolar Arctic) Another dead one. In fact, the last decade has favoured the living, so this is a return to past form.

Great Spotted Cuckoo *Clamator glandarius* (6, 35, 1)

Hampshire Keyhaven, first-summer, 2nd April (G. Horacek-Davis); same, Pennington Marsh, 8th-17th, photo. (per J. M. Clark) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plates 139 & 140).

(South Europe, Southwest Asia and Africa; winters Africa) This was the first record for Hampshire. Despite over forty records, this is still a true rarity; two is the most seen in any one year.

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* (22, 41, 1)

Cornwall St Levan, 12th-13th October, photo. (I. M. Wilson *et al.*) (plate 266).

(North and Central America; winters south to Argentina) One on mainland Cornwall for the second year running, but only the fifth there since 1959. The wait continues for the next Black-billed Cuckoo *C. erythrophthalmus*; the last one was on St Mary's, Scilly, in October 1990.



Dave Nye

266. Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*, St Levan, Cornwall, October 2000.

Eurasian Scops Owl *Otus scops* (64, 28, 0)

IRELAND

1998 Waterford Brownstown Head, freshly dead, 5th April (*Irish Birds* 6: 397).

(South Europe, Russia, West Africa and Northwest Africa; winters Africa) Only the third Irish record.

Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca* (many, 159, 1)

Outer Hebrides Near Kilpheder, South Uist, ♀, 24th May (W.A.K. Neill); present Askernish area, 23rd-26th; first noted, North Uist, 1st May (per B. Rabbitts).

(Circumpolar Arctic; disperses south in some winters) The fifth record for the Outer Hebrides. There have been no records in Shetland since 1995, when a first-winter male was taken aboard a vessel in the North Sea and subsequently released on Fetlar.



Bill Neill

Fig. 4. Female Snowy Owl *Nyctea scandiaca*, near Kilpheder, South Uist, Outer Hebrides, May 2000.

Chimney Swift *Chaetura pelagica* (0, 11, 1)

Yorkshire, East Spurn, 6th August (N.A. Bell, A. Hutt *et al.*).

1999 Cornwall Rame Head, 22nd-23rd October, photo. (G. Hodgson *et al.*). Drift Reservoir, two, 24th October (R. Johnson, L. P. Williams *et al.*); same as Penzance and Newlyn area, 23rd-24th (*Brit. Birds* 93: 541).

(North America) The bird at Spurn is presumably one that stayed on this side of the Atlantic following the influx of the previous autumn. Interestingly, one was also reported at Lærdalsoyri, Norway, on 26th May 2000 (*Birding World* 14: 37). The additional 1999 individual raises that year's total to a record five.

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (0, 27, 0)

1999 Norfolk Happisburgh, 25th October (R. G.W. Heselden).

IRELAND

1998 Louth Dundalk, 24th April (*Irish Birds* 6: 397).

(Northwest Africa and Iberia to southern Iran; winters Africa) The Happisburgh bird was seen while the individual at Mundesley (*Brit. Birds* 93: 541), just down the road and also in Norfolk, was still under observation, so this brings the record 1999 influx to 12.

Alpine Swift *Tachymarptis melba* (50, 435, 5)

Cleveland Greenabella Marsh and Seal Sands, 21st June (B. Beck).

Gower Eglwys Nunydd Reservoir, 4th May (C. Gittins *et al.*).

Scilly Tresco, 1st-3rd July, photo. (B. Thomas *et al.*). St Mary's, 23rd-24th, photo. (E.A. Fisher, R. L. Flood *et al.*).

Surrey Richmond Park, 27th May (S. Czapski).

(South Eurasia, Northwest and East Africa; winters Africa) Five records is the poorest showing since 1991, and well below average.

Little Swift *Apus affinis* (0, 16, 1)

Hampshire Beaulieu Road, New Forest, 4th June (P. Stanbury, J. Stokes *et al.*).

(Africa, Middle East and South Asia) The recent surge of records continues; this is the seventh since 1998.

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* (135, 95, 1)

Durham East Boldon, 13th-30th July, photo. (P.T. Bell, J. Crann, C. Richards *et al.*).

(South and East Europe, West Asia and Northwest Africa; winters Africa) First reported by non-birders, but many people enjoyed this wonderful bird thanks to the diligence of the local enthusiasts who followed up the initial report.

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra* (0, 9, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, 13th May (C.A. Holt *et al.*).

(Iberia and Morocco eastwards through the Mediterranean to Kazakhstan and Afghanistan; mainly resident, but partial migrant in the East) A mainland discovery would be most welcome, but, apart from the first, at Portland in 1961, all have been found on islands. This is the third for Fair Isle, hot on the heels of its second, in May 1999.

Lesser Short-toed Lark *Calandrella rufescens* (0, 1, 0)

IRELAND

1958 Wexford Great Saltee Island, five, 22nd March, one 23rd, two 24th, four 25th (*Brit. Birds* 53: 167; *Irish Bird Rep.* 6: 30), now reviewed by IRBC and considered no longer acceptable (*Irish Birds* 6: 413).

(Spain and North Africa eastwards to Manchuria; mainly resident and dispersive, but eastern populations winter south to Pakistan) Now that all the Irish records have been deleted, the one at Portland, on 2nd May 1992, is the sole accepted record for Britain and Ireland (*Brit. Birds* 88: 593-599).

Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica* (7, 343, 14)

Cornwall Marazion, 2nd May (P.A. Fraser, A. Parks).
Devon Torcross/Slapton Ley, 25th-26th April (M. R. Langman *et al.*).
Dorset Lodmoor, 3rd-4th May (H. G. Wood Homer *et al.*).
Hertfordshire Hilfield Park Reservoir, 27th May (S. Murray).
Kent Dungeness, two, 22nd April (M. Garwood, R. J. Price *et al.*). St Margaret's, two, 7th May (Dr A. M. Hanby *et al.*).
Northumberland Holy Island, 26th-27th April (P. R. Davey, S. Sexton *et al.*).
Scilly St Mary's, 1st to at least 14th May, photo. (A. Bartlett, R. L. Flood, R. Souter *et al.*). St Agnes, 8th-10th May (N. E. Burns, D. Page *et al.*); possibly same as St Mary's.
Shetland Scatness, 8th May, photo. (J. N. Dymond, M. Mellor, Dr R. Riddington); presumed same, Loch of Hillwell, 10th (P.V. Harvey, Dr R. Riddington). Fair Isle, 11th May, photo. (H. E. Maggs *et al.*).
Wight, Isle of Culver Down, 20th May (M. Buckley).
1998 Cornwall Millbrook, 1st-10th March (*Brit. Birds* 92: 586), correct locality was Millook.
1999 Berkshire Theale Gravel-pits, 9th May (T. G. Ball); present 8th-9th, 11th, photo.
IRELAND
1998 Cork Baltimore, 19th-21st February (*Irish Birds* 6: 398).

(Southern and Eastern Eurasia and Africa; European population winters Africa)

Cliff Swallow *Hirundo pyrrhonota* (0, 6, 2)

Dorset The Verne, Portland, 29th-30th September, photo. (D. J. Chown, C. E. Richards, J. Stirling *et al.*).
Scilly St Mary's, 28th-30th September, photo. (J. K. Higginson, S. Turner *et al.*).

(North America; winters Chile, Brazil and Argentina) Two in one thrilling weekend, the fifth and sixth British records. In a recent article, attention has been drawn to the possibility that the similar Cave Swallow *P. fulva* might occur in Europe, following recent influxes onto the eastern seaboard of the United States (*Birding World* 13: 368-374).

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (1, 211, 16)

Cleveland Hartlepool Docks, 26th November (R. C. Taylor).
Cornwall Cape Cornwall, 13th November (M.T. Elliot, K.A. Wilson) (fig. 5, page 484).
Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 8th November (P. M. Troake, K. M. Wilson *et al.*).
Scilly St Mary's, 1st November, photo. (M. S. Scott, K. Webb *et al.*).
Shetland Kergord, 21st-22nd September (P. Sclater, J. Wolstencroft *et al.*). Fair Isle, five: 25th September to 3rd October (H. E. Maggs *et al.*); 29th September, probably same, 3rd October (C. A. Holt, D. N. Shaw); 19th October (A. J. Bull, C. A. Holt, H. E. Maggs); 26th-27th October (A. J. Bull); 10th November (A. J. Bull, M. A. Newell). Baltasound, Unst, 28th September (M. G. Pennington). Skaw, Unst, 29th September (M. G. Pennington, C. C. Rodger). Burrafirth, Unst, 2nd October (W. Dickson, C. C. Rodger). Skaw, Whalsay, 11th-13th October (Dr B. Marshall *et al.*). Virkie, dead, 26th October, specimen at National Museum of Scotland (P.V. Harvey *et al.*).
Suffolk Southwold, 12th-13th November (B. J. Small, R. Walden *et al.*).
1999 Hampshire Fareham, 27th October (A. P. Blunden).

(Northeast Russia to Central and East Asia; winters Southeast Asia) A welcome return to form for this dynamic Asiatic pipit. After several lean years, five on Fair Isle was part of a good influx in Shetland, where the one at Kergord is the earliest autumn record in Britain. Away from Shetland, an 'OBP' is still a very creditable find on the east coast and, surprisingly, the one at Southwold was the first for Suffolk.

Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus* (30, 379, 16)

Dorset Weston, Portland, 12th May (G. Walbridge).
Norfolk Holme, 22nd April (S. Betts, N. Mears, J. R. Williamson *et al.*). Winterton, 15th May (I. Smith). Burnham Norton, 16th May (A. I. Bloomfield). Stiffkey, 19th September (D. A. Bridges, A. J. L. Smith). Blakeney, 19th September (I. Burrows *et al.*); not same as Stiffkey.



Martin Elliot

Fig. 5. Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*, Cape Cornwall, Cornwall, November 2000.

Outer Hebrides St Kilda, 26th September to 2nd Oetober (A. Robinson).
Pembrokeshire Skomer, 19th-21st Oetober (D.J.Astins, M. J. Pilsworth, O. Roberts).
Scilly St Mary's, 1st Oetober (T. Lowe, M. S. Scott); 25th October (R. Pulley *et al.*). Treseo, 25th Oetober (E.A. Fisher, R. L. Flood).
Shetland Fair Isle, 11th-13th September (C. A. Holt, H. E. Maggs *et al.*); first-winter, 2nd-7th October, trapped 6th, 7th (H. E. Maggs, D. N. Shaw *et al.*).
Surrey Beddington Sewage-farm, 15th October (D. Eland, N. Gardner, G. Messenbird).
Suffolk Shingle Street, adult, trapped 30th September (P. Catehpole, J. Glazebrook).
Yorkshire, North Whitestone Point, Whitby, 20th September (R. S. Slaek).
1999 Kent Motney Hill, 8th November (A. Parker).
1999 Scilly St Mary's, 12th Oetober (M. S. Seott *et al.*).
1999 Yorkshire, East Beaeon Ponds, Kilnsea, 25th-27th May, photo. (M. J. Pilsworth *et al.*).

(Aretie Eurasia; winters India and Afriea) The three additional 1999 reeords bring that year's total to 15.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (2, 122, 10)

Northumberland Farne Islands, first-winter, 26th September (D. Coath, R. M. Harvey, S.Thomas).
Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 22nd-28th September (P. Freneh *et al.*).
Pembrokeshire Skomer, first-winter, 28th September (S.Avery, J. G. Brown, M. J. Pilsworth).
Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, 14th-16th August (H. E. Maggs *et al.*); first-winter, 2nd September (C. A. Holt *et al.*); first-winter, 20th September (C. A. Holt). Quendale, juvenile/first-winter, 30th August to 16th September (Dr R. Riddington *et al.*). Seatness, juvenile, 13th September (Dr R. Riddington). Out Skerries, first-winter, 27th August (P. M. Ellis, J. D. Okill, P. Selater); first-winter, 15th-16th September (P. M. Ellis, P.V. Harvey, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*).

(Northeast and East Russia, West Siberia, West and Central Asia; winters southern and Southwest Asia) Not atypieally, the Northern Isles took the lion's share of the diseoveries, with not a single mainland reeord.The one on Skomer was, perhaps surprisingly, the first record for Wales.

Alpine Accentor *Prunella collaris* (29, 11, 2)

Kent St Margaret's, 6th May (Dr A. M. Hanby, R. 1. Jenkinson *et al.*).
Suffolk Corton, 13th May, photo. (D. Beamish, P. Napthine, R. C. Smith, J. Wylson *et al.*); possibly same as Kent.

(Mountains in Iberia and Northwest Afriea, the Alps east to Japan; winters in lower valleys) These two were part of a small influx into northwest Europe, with one on Helgoland, Germany, and two in the Netherlands during April and May.

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (2, 136, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, 4th June (C.A. Holt).
1999 Fife Isle of May, trapped 17th May, photo. (A. Coates, C. Walton).

(Seandinavia, East Europe and West Asia; winters Africa) For such a skulking speeies, it is perhaps not surprising that many turn up in mist nets. Like 1999, a relatively quiet year, following the eight in 1998.

Rufous Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos L. m. hafizi* (0, 2, 0)

1971 Shetland Fair Isle, dead, 30th October, skin now at National Museum of Seotland: originally aeeepted as *L. m. africana/hafizi* (*Brit. Birds* 73: 519), now considered to relate to *L. m. hafizi*.
1991 Yorkshire, East Spurn, 6th-14th Oetober, trapped 6th, photo. (J. Cudworth, B. R. Spence *et al.*): originally aceepted as *L. m. africana/hafizi* (*Brit. Birds* 91: 501), but now eonsidered to relate to *L. m. hafizi*.

(Asiatie Russia; winters Northeast Africa) The Spurn individual was quite distinctive in the



Iain H. Leach

267. Female or first-winter Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*, Skegness, Lincolnshire, October 1999.

field, being somewhat reminiscent of a Rufous-tailed Scrub-robin *Cercotrichas galactotes* both in appearance and in behaviour. It showed a pale supercilium, which stretched to the eye, and sandy-grey upperparts, with prominent pale fringes to the greater coverts and tertials.

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* (3, 22, 0)

1999 Lincolnshire Skegness, ♀ or first-winter, 22nd-23rd October, photo. (K. E. Durose *et al.*) (plate 267).

(Northeast Europe across Asia to Japan; winters Southeast Asia) This brings the record 1999 total to five. In Finland, some 26 territories were located in 2000 (*Birding World* 14: 39), so perhaps we can expect more if the weather conditions in autumn are right.

Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* Eastern races *S. t. maura/stejnegeri* (1, 278, 8)

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, ♀ or first-winter, 14th October (S. D. Stansfield *et al.*).
Lincolnshire Saltfleet, ♀ or first-winter, 1st-3rd October, photo. (S. E. Duffield *et al.*).
Northeast Scotland Balmedie, first-winter ♂, 26th-27th September, photo. (Dr I. M. Phillips, R. A. Schofield *et al.*).
Orkney Deerness, ♂, age uncertain, 16th-18th September (B. C., E. M. & E. Forrester *et al.*).
Shetland Fair Isle, ♀, 16th May (S. J. Turner *et al.*). Boddam, ♀ or first-winter, 5th October (P. M. Ellis). Baltasound, Unst, ♀ or first-winter, 31st October to 2nd November (W. Dickson, P. V. Harvey, M. G. Pennington). Haroldswick, Unst, ♀ or first-winter, 13th-14th November (W. Dickson, P. V. Harvey).

(White Sea across Siberia; winters Iran, Southeast Asia, Borneo) BBRC is about to undertake a review of all spring records. The problem of misidentification of spring males has been highlighted in recent articles (*Brit. Birds* 94: 315-318; *Birding World* 14: 156-158).

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (1, 16, 1)

Norfolk Blakeney Point, first-winter, 1st October (S. C. Joyner, A. M. Stoddart *et al.*).

(South and Central Eurasia from Russia and Turkey eastwards; winters Northeast and East Africa and from Arabia eastwards to Central India) With fewer than twenty records, this subtle wheatear is still a major rarity. This well-studied individual perhaps deserved a wider audience. It represents the first record in Norfolk since 1977.

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* (3, 41, 2)

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, first-winter ♀, 18th-26th November, photo. (G. W. Allison, S. Pettifer, K. M. Wilson *et al.*) (plates 29 & 268).
Shetland Toab, ♂, age uncertain, 17th September (P. V. Harvey, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe and South-central Asia; winters East Africa) The one at Gibraltar Point was the first for Lincolnshire. Slightly later than most previous records, it arrived during an exceptional period for eastern rarities, which included nine Hume's Warblers *Phylloscopus humei* and two Isabelline Shrikes *Lanius isabellinus*.



G. P. Catley

268. First-winter Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, Gibraltar Point, Lincolnshire, November 2000.

Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica* (15, 45, 1)

Dorset Upton Heath, first-summer ♀, *O. h. melanoleuca*, 25th-26th June, photo. (C. Button, J. Lidster *et al.*) (fig. 6; *Brit. Birds* 93: plate 213).

(Southern Europe, Northwest Africa and Southwest Asia, also Iran; winters West Africa) The rather worn plumage of this individual proved instructive. Photographs clearly showed the narrow black band on the forehead above the bill, a feature that the western form *hispanica* lacks.



Chris Button

Fig. 6. First-summer female Black-eared Wheatear *Oenanthe hispanica*, of eastern race *melanoleuca*, Upton Heath, Dorset, June 2000.

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (11, 66, 2)

Cleveland Boulby Cliffs, ♂, 12th-14th November, photo. (N. Jackson, H. Mitchell *et al.*).
Norfolk Holme, ♀, 2nd-4th November, photo. (P. Sands *et al.*).

(Saharan Africa, Arabia and Pakistan) A total of 79 has now occurred in Britain; why are they always so late in the year?

Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* (0, 4, 1)

Cornwall Pendeen, first-summer ♀, 14th-18th May, photo. (M. Southam *et al.*).

(Southern Europe, southern Asia and Northwest Africa) A fascinating series of records, with three birds in southwest England in the space of just seven months (see *Brit. Birds* 93: 551). A discussion of the earlier records of this species in Britain can be found in *Brit. Birds* 88: 130-132.

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus* (0, 8, 0)

IRELAND
1998 Cork Galley Head, first-year, 25th-26th October, photo. (*Irish Birds* 6: 398).

(North America; winters southern USA south to Guatemala)

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* (1, 20, 2)

Scilly St Mary's, first-winter, 12th-19th October, photo. (M. Coller, W. Collingham, N. Pepper *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plate 365).
Shetland Brae, first-winter, 12th-13th October (I. Gordon, N. Milligan, P. Sclater *et al.*).

(North America; winters Central America south to Argentina) Finally, following a nine-year wait, the crowds on Scilly got to grips with this elusive thrush, raising £500 for charity in the process. On the date that the two British birds were discovered, a third individual arrived in Europe, on Ouessant, France.

Zitting Cisticola *Cisticola juncidis* (0, 4, 1)

Dorset Portland Bill, 15th-16th May (P. F. Baker *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plate 186).

(Mediterranean, west and north France, also Africa and South Asia to Australia) Rather like buses, two arrived on the south coast almost together, 23 years after the previous one. Unfortunately, no details have been submitted of the second bird, which spent ten days at Hengistbury Head, Dorset, and which stimulated the largest twitch of the year. One at La Claire Mare, Guernsey, on 1st January, presumed to be the same as one trapped and photographed there on 24th April, was the first for the Channel Islands.

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (9, 75, 5)

Shetland Out Skerries, first-winter, 1st September (P. M. Ellis, P. V. Harvey, Dr R. Riddington). Fair Isle, first-winter, trapped 4th September (D. de Palacio, C. A. Holt *et al.*); age uncertain, 11th September (C. A. Holt *et al.*); first-winter, 12th-17th September, trapped 12th (H. E. Maggs, D. N. Shaw *et al.*); age uncertain, 16th-17th September, probably since 12th (C. A. Holt, Dr M. Whittingham *et al.*).

(East Eurasia from Central Russia to northern Japan; winters Philippines and Southeast Asia) The one on Out Skerries becomes the earliest autumn sighting, a week earlier than the previous earliest record, and perhaps a reflection of the species prospering in Europe (there were 20 singing males in Finland in 2000, *Brit. Birds* 94: 424). Otherwise, Fair Isle had the monopoly: it is still reassuring to know exactly where and when to go to see this species in Britain!

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* (many, 60+, 2)

Sussex, East Locality withheld, ♂, 7th May, ♀, 10th June, both to at least 9th August, two broods raised, photo. (observers' names withheld).

(Europe, West and Central Asia and Northwest Africa) It is good to know that this species still breeds in Britain occasionally, although most records appear to relate to transient males.

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (2, 46, 0)

1999 Essex Fisher's Green, first-winter, 26th-28th October (*Brit. Birds* 93: 554), locality was Seventy Acres Gravel-pit, Cheshunt Gravel-pits (per A. Wilson).

IRELAND

1998 Donegal Tory Island, first-winter, trapped 21st September (*Irish Birds* 6: 399).

(Southern Russia and Asia; winters Southwest Asia and India) No details have been received of a bird trapped at Titchfield Haven, Hampshire, in October 2000. The one in Essex in 1999 would have been in Hertfordshire prior to the county boundary changes in 1974/75.

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (9, 32, 4)

Cheshire Woolston Eyes, juvenile, trapped 26th August, video., photo. (S. Kennedy *et al.*).

Highland Nigg Ferry, Easter Ross, in song, 7th-22nd June, photo. (D. Butterfield, C. H. Crooke, R. Swann *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plate 235).

Shetland Fair Isle, trapped 15th May (D. N. Shaw *et al.*); 12th-13th June, trapped 12th (C. A. Holt, N. Rutter, D. N. Shaw *et al.*).

(Eurasia eastwards from Finland; winters India and Sri Lanka) The singing male in Highland provided many observers with their first opportunity to study this species in song, at least in Britain. August appears to be the month for surprise discoveries in mist nets; ringers be warned!

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (23, 185, 1)

Northamptonshire Earl's Barton, in song, 10th-28th June, photo. (K. Taylor, J. E. Ward *et al.*).

(Europe, Southwest and East Asia and North Africa; winters Africa) It is hard to miss this raucous songster, although 2000 was the quietest year since 1986. Details of a bird photographed in Lincolnshire have not yet been received.

Olivaceous Warbler *Hippolais pallida* (0, 13, 1)

Northeast Scotland Collieston, *H. p. elaeica*, 13th-21st September, trapped 15th, photo. (P. A. A. Baxter, P. S. Crockett *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plate 371).

(Iberia and North Africa and the Balkans east to Pakistan and Kazakhstan; winters Africa south of the Sahara) All British records appear to be of the eastern form *elaeica*. It has been suggested recently that the species should be split, to recognise the eastern and western forms as separate species (*Birding World* 14: 192-219).

Booted Warbler *Hippolais caligata* (1, 80, 8)

Dorset Portland Bill, *H. c. rama*, trapped 1st July, photo. (M. Cade *et al.*).

Kent Bockhill, 10th September (P. J. Chantler *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skomer, 14th-15th September (S. Avery, M. J. Pilsworth).

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter, 1st-2nd September, trapped 1st (C. A. Holt, D. N. Shaw *et al.*); age uncertain, trapped 10th September (A. J. Bull, C. A. Holt, D. N. Shaw *et al.*). Norwick, Unst, 15th-17th September (C. C. Rodger *et al.*). Hillwell, 23rd September (P. V. Harvey, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Spurn, 26th-27th August, photo. (A. Hutt, A. Roadhouse *et al.*).

(Northeast Russia east to Mongolia and south to Iran; winters India) 'Sykes's Warbler' *H. c. rama* is characterised by a somewhat longer bill and tail, and a shorter primary projection, compared with the nominate form *caligata*. This potential new species is just as likely to be confused with Olivaceous Warbler *H. pallida* of the form *elaeica* as it is with *caligata*. This is only the second British record of *rama* (the first was in Shetland in 1993), although some earlier records are currently under review. It is interesting to note that, while there have been no singing males in spring since 1992, breeding was proved for the first time in Finland in 2000 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 425). The Spurn area now has nine records, second only to Fair Isle's ten.

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* (0, 3, 1)

Scilly Tresco, first-winter, 15th-21st October, photo. (S. J. Broyd *et al.*) (plate 269; *Brit. Birds* 93: plate 367).

(Southwest Europe, Middle East, North Africa, Madeira, Canary and Cape Verde Islands) The first accepted autumn record, and, perhaps surprisingly, straightforward to identify.



Steve Young/Birdwatch

269. First-winter Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*, Tresco, Scilly, October 2000.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* (12, 435, 28)

Caernarfonshire Near Penmaenmawr, ♂, 2nd May (L. Jones). Llandudno, ♂, 14th-17th May (P. & R. Gallon *et al.*). Bardsey, ♂, 11th-13th June (N. P. Barlow, B. Craddock, S. D. Stansfield *et al.*).
Cornwall Land's End, ♂, 1st May, ♀, 1st-3rd, photo. (P. A. Maker, K. A. Wilson *et al.*). Nanjizal, ♀, trapped 1st May, photo. (K. A. Wilson).
Hampshire Warnford, ♂, 20th-23rd May (M. J. W. Hay *et al.*).
Highland Isle of Eigg, Inverness-shire, ♂, 29th-30th April (J. Chester, S. Sankey).
Meirionnydd Tal-y-Bont, ♂, 22nd April (N. Fellows).
Northumberland East Chevington, ♂, 6th-7th May (S. J. McElwee *et al.*). Farne Islands, ♂, 10th May (N. Mugan *et al.*).
Scilly St Agnes, ♂, 20th May (N. Wheatley); first-winter ♀, 4th-7th October (K. C. Osborne, D. Page *et al.*).
Shetland Fair Isle, five: first-summer ♀, 20th April to 3rd May, trapped 20th (D. N. Shaw *et al.*); ♂, 7th-11th May (C. A. Holt *et al.*); ♂, 14th May (C. A. Holt *et al.*); first-summer ♂, 1st-3rd June (C. A. Holt, E. A. Riddiford *et al.*); ♀, 10th June (D. de Palacio *et al.*). Noss, ♂, 15th May (M. Maher); another, ♂, 20th (M. Maher, A. J. Upton *et al.*). Hamister, Whalsay, ♀, 31st May to 1st June (Mr & Mrs A. R. Irvine, J. L. Irvine *et al.*). Voe, ♂, 16th-21st June (N. Milligan *et al.*). Foula, ♂, 17th June (F. Ratter). Skaw, Whalsay, ♂, 15th September (Dr B. Marshall).
Sussex, East Beachy Head, ♀ or first-summer ♂, 21st April (P. Netherway, D. I. Smith *et al.*).
Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, ♂, 5th-6th June (R. Baines, G. Chapman *et al.*). Spurn, first-summer ♂, trapped 12th July, photo. (D. P. Boyle *et al.*); ♂, 16th September (D. Hursthouse).
1989 Essex Lawford, near Manningtree, ♂, freshly dead, 17th April, skin at Colchester Museum, photo. (per P. Bruce, N. C. Green *et al.*).
1999 Orkney North Ronaldsay, ♂, 11th May (P. J. Donnelly).

(South Europe, West Turkey and Northwest Africa; winters northern and West Africa) Not far behind the record 36 in 1995. This former rarity is becoming more common. The next challenge will be to sort out individuals to subspecies level: *albistriata* has already occurred, but what

about *moltonii*? The marvellous new guide by Shirihai *et al.* (*Sylvia Warblers*) should help in this respect.

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* (1, 56, 1)

Sussex, East Roedean, ♂, 20th-21st April (I.T. Barnard, I. J. Whitcomb *et al.*).

(Southern Europe, Middle East and North Africa)

Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana* (0, 10, 1)

Yorkshire, East Sammy's Point, Easington, 7th-11th May, photo. (M. Finn, A. Paulls, M. F. Stoyle *et al.*) (plate 270; *Brit. Birds* 93: plate 183).

(Middle East, Central Asia and Northwest Sahara) The second for Spurn, and the first in Britain since one in Norfolk in 1993, which was also in spring. As usual with vagrants in this country, it was extremely confiding, a far cry from the species' behaviour on the breeding grounds. All the British records have been assigned to the eastern form, *nana*.



Iain H. Leach

270. Desert Warbler *Sylvia nana*, Sammy's Point, Easington, East Yorkshire, May 2000.

Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides* (13, 329, 16)

Cornwall Kenidjack, 24th September, photo. (J. D. Swann, T. Whiley *et al.*).

Fife Fife Ness, 3rd September (T. Glass, R.A. Lambert, Prof. T. C. Smout *et al.*).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, 26th August, photo. (B.A. E. Marr *et al.*).

Shetland Fair Isle, 19th August (H. E. Maggs); first-winter, 27th-29th August, trapped 27th (C. A. Holt, M. Pettersson *et al.*); 28th-30th August (H. E. Maggs *et al.*). Sumburgh Head, 26th August (P. V. Harvey, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*). Out Skerries, two, 27th August (P. M. Ellis, J. D. Okill, P. Sclater). Skaw, Whalsay, 27th-28th August, trapped 27th (Dr B. Marshall *et al.*). Sandwick, Whalsay, 28th August (Dr B. Marshall). Sumburgh, 4th-10th September (G. Robertson *et al.*). Geosetter, 15th-17th September (S. Holloway, S. A. Stirrup, T. J. Wilson *et al.*). Hamister, Whalsay, 16th-17th September (J. L. & J. Irvine, Dr B. Marshall).

Yorkshire, East Spurn, 27th-29th August, photo. (L. J. Degnan, A. Roadhouse *et al.*). Flamborough Head, 2nd-4th September, photo. (F. X. Moffatt *et al.*) (plate 271; *Brit. Birds* 93: plate 304).

1999 Durham Marsden, 25th August (T. I. Mills *et al.*).

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1998 Donegal Tory Island, first-winter, trapped 21st September (*Irish Birds* 6: 399).

(Europe east from northern Germany; winters Pakistan, India and Indochina) None occurred in spring for the second year running.



Gary Bellingham

271. Greenish Warbler *Phylloscopus trochiloides*, Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, September 2000.



Iain H. Leach

272. Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*, Spurn, East Yorkshire, October 2000.

These two photographs emphasise that the separation of Arctic and Greenish Warblers can still be a real nightmare, especially when views are brief, or if the identification is not based upon a suite of characters. Structural features are often more reliable than subtle plumage differences but, in this regard, the two individuals above are very similar. Both have a primary projection of around 70% of the exposed tertials, while the bill structures also look quite similar, at least in these photos; the bill of the Arctic Warbler is perhaps marginally longer. In this case, other clues confirm the identification, notably the uniform grey legs and feet of the Greenish (compared with the paler feet and rear tarsi of the Arctic), and the head pattern, in particular the shape and extent of the supercilium, and the patterning of the ear-coverts.

Another example of the potential problems caused by these two species involved an Arctic Warbler on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 14th-15th September 2000. Deryk Shaw commented that this was a particularly tricky individual: 'the small size and dark legs suggested Greenish, whereas the stout build, mottled ear-coverts, dull coloration (above and below), very long supercilium, and double wingbars pointed more towards Arctic. Features such as primary projection, bill size, and [the point] where the supercilia started were unhelpful on this bird. In fact, if it had not called, I would not have been 100% convinced that it was an Arctic'. A similarly confusing individual was present on North Ronaldsay, two days after the Fair Isle bird. This was, apparently, identified in the field as a Greenish Warbler, but found to be an Arctic Warbler when it was trapped. Perhaps these two records may even have referred to the same individual? The debate on how to separate some Arctic and Greenish Warblers, at least those that do not call, continues.

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (19, 220, 8)

Northumberland Farne Islands, 2nd-3rd September, photo. (G. Garner, A. Mills, N. Mugan).
Orkney North Ronaldsay, 5th September, photo. (P. A. Brown *et al.*); first-winter, trapped 17th September (A. E. Dunean, D. Hatton, Dr C. C. McGuigan *et al.*).
Scilly St Mary's, 6th-11th October (D. Watson *et al.*).
Shetland Fair Isle, 4th September (C. A. Holt *et al.*); 14th-15th September (A. J. Bull, C. A. Holt, D. N. Shaw *et al.*).
Suffolk Dunwieh, first-winter, trapped 25th September, photo. (H. Axell, T. Hurrell, C. S. Waller *et al.*).
Yorkshire, East Spurn and Kilnsea, 7th-17th October, trapped 17th, photo. (D. P. Boyle, L. J. Degnan, D. Hursthouse *et al.*) (plate 272; *Brit. Birds* 93: plate 350).

(Northern Fennoscandia east to Alaska; winters Southeast Asia) A good tally in comparison with reeent years; in faet, the best sinee 1997.

Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* (0, 34, 9)

Cleveland North Gare, 10th-12th November, photo. (M. A. Bliek, J. Crussell *et al.*).
Dorset Portland Bill, 4th-9th December, trapped 7th, photo. (M. Cade *et al.*).
Fife Crail, 7th-8th November (N. Elkins, S. Paterson, R. Shand *et al.*).
Northumberland Low Hauxley, 7th-14th November, trapped 8th, photo. (M. J. Carr, I. Fisher *et al.*). Holy Island, 9th-13th November (S. Bearhop, P. R. Davey, S. C. Votier *et al.*).
Sussex, East Seaford, at least 9th-10th Deeember (J. Curson, G. Gowlett, P. J. Wilson).
Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, 11th-13th November, photo. (R. Baines, I. Forsyth, F. X. Moffatt *et al.*).
Yorkshire, North Filey, 8th November, photo. (C. C. Thomas, H. J. Whitehead *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plate 368). Whitestone Point, Whitby, 11th-12th Novcmber (J. A. Beaumont, R. S. Slack *et al.*).
1988 Leicestershire Ashby-de-la-Zouch, 10th January to at least 18th February (*Brit. Birds* 91: 506), now considered unaeceptable.
1996 Scilly St Mary's, 4th-7th October, probably sinee 1st (*Brit. Birds* 91: 508), was November.
1999 Durham Whitburn, 17th-18th Oetober (T. I. Mills *et al.*).

(From Sayan and Altai mountains south to the Northwest Himalayas; winters mainly Indian Subeontinent) This year's arrival is a repeat of the influx in November 1994, when seven were reeorded. With increasing observer awareness, a truer picture of the oeeurrenee of this recently defined species is beginning to unfold.

Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* (1, 197, 30)

Borders Mire Loeh, St Abb's Head, 13th-15th Oetober (G. Paterson *et al.*).
Cornwall Land's End, 1st Oetober (B. R. Cox, G. Spinks, R. J. Watts). St Levan, 15th Oetober, photo. (K. Clements *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plate 349). Nanjizal, 17th-18th October (K. A. Wilson).
Devon Dawlish Warren, 18th Oetober (K. Rylands *et al.*). East Soar, 24th October (M. Knott).
Dorset Portland Bill, trapped 1st Oetober, photo. (M. Cade *et al.*).
Essex Fairlop, 1st-2nd Oetober (A. A. Bell *et al.*).
Kent Boekhill, 24th Oetober (J. R. & P. J. Chantler).
Lincolnshire Grainthorpe Marsh, 1st October (H. Bunn *et al.*). Donna Nook, 1st-3rd Oetober (G. P. Catley, N. Drinkall).
Norfolk Blakeney Point, 30th September (S. C. Joyner, A. M. Stoddart). Holkham Meals, 1st October (B. Hieks *et al.*). Seolt Head, 1st October (N. M. Lawton).
Northeast Scotland Balmedie Country Park, first-winter, trapped 26th September (R. Dunean, I. Rendall). Peterhead, 12th Oetober (M. Innes).
Scilly St Mary's, 25th-27th Oetober, photo. (J. K. Higginson, C. Lamsdell, S. Turner *et al.*).
Shetland West Green, Whalsay, trapped 2nd October (G. M. Buchanan, Dr B. Marshall, P. A. Thompson *et al.*). Houb, Whalsay, trapped 22nd October (Dr B. Marshall *et al.*).
Suffolk Thorpeness, at least 1st October (M. L. Cornish, D. Fairhurst).
Sussex, East Coombe Haven, Bexhill, 14th-15th October (K. Johnson, S. Riehardson, I. Standivan *et al.*).

Yorkshire, East Spurn, eight: 30th September to 1st October, trapped 30th (D. P. Boyle, D. Hursthouse, T. Rogers *et al.*); 30th September to 2nd October, trapped 30th (P. J. Alker, R. J. Lowe *et al.*); 30th September to 1st October (L. J. Degnan, G. Featherstone, J. Wozencroft *et al.*); 30th September (L. J. Degnan); 1st October (T. Collins, M. Coverdale, J. Wozencroft *et al.*); 1st October (D. Hursthouse *et al.*); 1st October (L. J. Degnan *et al.*); 1st October (D. Hursthouse *et al.*).
Yorkshire, North Filey, 2nd October (P. Cunningham, S. Goodwin, R. Scullion *et al.*).
1999 Kent Bockhill, 14th October, photo. (P. J. Chantler, S. Clinch, R. Heading); 17th October (J. R. & P. J. Chantler, R. Heading, J. Russell).
1999 Scilly Watermill, St Mary's, 16th October, photo. (M. Hodgkin, M. Thomas *et al.*). Tresco, 6th October, photo. (A. Brampton, J. Miller *et al.*).

(Central and East Asia; winters Southeast Asia) A record tally, which includes a remarkable fall of at least eight at Spurn, during just two days. Following the eleven on Scilly in October 1999, are we about to witness a dramatic increase in the numbers of this vagrant, similar to that of Pallas's Leaf Warbler *P. proregulus*? The previous best total was 22, in both 1991 and 1999.

Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus* (1, 212, 11)

Cornwall Treen, 15th October (N. Hewitt, L. Lock, P. A. St Pierre *et al.*). Porthgwarra, 6th November (M. D. Wallace).
Dorset Southwell, Portland, 15th-17th October (M. Cade, P. A. Coe, G. Walbridge *et al.*). Portland Bill, trapped 16th November, photo. (M. Cade *et al.*).
Norfolk Scolt Head, 30th September to 1st October (N. M. Lawton *et al.*). Blakeney Point, 16th October (S. C. Joyner, A. M. Stoddart). Great Yarmouth, 21st November (B. Hicks *et al.*).
Northumberland Low Hauxley, 7th November (M. J. Carr *et al.*).
Shetland Voxter, 29th September (G. J. A. Burton, B. A. Ryan, M. A. Warburton). Sandwick, Whalsay, trapped 29th September, photo. (G. M. Buchanan, J. L. Irvine, Dr B. Marshall).
Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, 7th November (D. Bywater *et al.*).
1999 Norfolk Holkham Meals, 15th-16th November (J. R. McCallum *et al.*).

(Central and northeastern to southern Asia; winters northern India and Southeast Asia) This species is now officially rarer than Radde's Warbler *P. schwarzi*, which finally overtook it during this autumn's record influx. The best years for Dusky Warblers were in the early 1990s, with 19 in 1990 and 22 in 1994.

Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (3, 53, 2)

Scilly St Agnes, 30th April to 5th May, photo. (J. Hale, D. Page *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plate 182).
Suffolk Landguard, 27th-29th May, trapped 27th, photo. (P. Holmes, J. Lees, N. Odin *et al.*).

(Central, western and southern Europe and Northwest Africa; winters in tropical West Africa) Even if one assumes that it is now not being overlooked, Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *P. orientalis* remains a true rarity.

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus brehmii* (0, 4, 1)

Cornwall Dunmere Woods, near Bodmin, in song, 13th to at least 31st May, sound-recorded (S. M. Christophers, D. A. Conway *et al.*).

(Iberia and southwest France; winters Africa) The identity of single individuals trapped at Portland and on Bardsey remains inconclusive. Ideally, observers of a putative Iberian Chiffchaff should attempt to obtain sound-recordings. The Committee has received no details of a singing male reported in Oxfordshire.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* (2, 21, 0)

1999 Orkney North Ronaldsay, ♀, 31st May, photo. (P. A. Brown, S. Holloway, T. Wilson *et al.*).

(Central and Southeast Europe and western Russia; winters Africa) A record of one trapped on Bardsey is still under consideration.

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (0, 145, 3)

Kent Dungeness, age uncertain, 22nd October (S. Busittil, N.A. Driver *et al.*).
Norfolk Titchwell, ♂, 8th-9th April, photo. (R. & J. Elvin *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plate 187).
Sussex, East Icklesham, ♂, trapped 29th September, photo. (T. Squire *et al.*).

(Western Europe to Manchuria; mainly resident, occasionally dispersive or irruptive) Numbers have been declining in recent years. The Committee is still awaiting details of a bird at Gibraltar Point photographed on 13th June.

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* (0, 1, 1)

Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter ♀, trapped 21st October, photo. (J. N. Dymond, D. N. Shaw *et al.*) (plate 273).

(Central and East Asia) Unfortunately for some, this remained for only one day, but it played its part in what became a 'classic' autumn for Siberian vagrants. Fair Isle's best birds seem to turn up in October ('the later it gets, the bigger they come'), and an exciting account of this discovery can be found in *Birding Scotland* 4: 33-35.



Hywell Maggs

273. First-winter female Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*, Fair Isle, Shetland, October 2000.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (1, 53, 3)

Cambridgeshire Nene Washes, ♀, 8th-9th September, photo. (J. P. Taylor *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plate 347).
Northumberland Whitley Bay, first-winter, 9th-21st November, photo. (N. P. Dales, K. W. Regan *et al.*) (plates 25 & 274).
Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, first-winter, 8th-10th November, photo. (F. X. Moffatt *et al.*).

(South Asia to China; winters Northeast Africa) The adult female in Cambridgeshire was identified as being of the race *isabellinus*, colloquially known as 'Daurian Shrike'. An in-depth study of the racial attribution of all British records is in progress. A comprehensive appraisal of the 'Red-tailed Shrike' complex can be found in *Dutch Birding* 22: 323-362.



Iain H. Leach

274. First-winter Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*, Whitley Bay, Northumberland, November 2000.

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (32, 128, 1)

Shetland Hillwell, first-winter, 23rd September to 9th October, photo. (P. V. Harvey, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*).

(Southern and eastern Europe and Southwest Asia; winters East and South Africa) Another first-winter in Shetland, which is developing quite a reputation for this species.

Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis* (1, 14, 1)

Orkney Windwick, South Ronaldsay, first-winter, *L. m. pallidirostris*, 22nd September (K. Fairclough, A. C. Knight).

(North Africa across the Middle East and Arabia eastwards to India and Southern Asia; mainly sedentary, but southern Asian population winters south to Sudan, northern Ethiopia and Somalia) The first since 1997, and another 'Steppe Grey Shrike', *L. m. pallidirostris*. All sixteen British records of this species are of this form.

Nutcracker *Nucifraga caryocatactes* (45, 355, 0)

1996 Hampshire Denny Wood, 29th December (D. Houghton), previously rejected (*Brit. Birds* 90: 519); now considered acceptable.

(Eurasia from Scandinavia and the Alps to Kamchatka and China)

Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus* (160, 384, 37)

Angus & Dundee Montrose, juvenile, 2nd-5th October, photo. (H. Bell, E. McCabe, R. McCurley).
Avon Hanham, Bristol, adult, 14th December to 2001, photo. (R. Laughton *et al.*).
Caernarfonshire Bardsey, juvenile, 14th October (A. W. G. John, S. D. Stansfield *et al.*).
Cornwall Pelynt, juvenile, 7th November to 14th December, photo. (C. Beesley, J. & A. Griffiths *et al.*).
Cumbria Beckfoot, adult, 15th June (D. M. & B. M. White).
Devon Near Beer, adult, 3rd June (M. H. Rigby). Crediton, adult, 13th June (T. Jones, M. Russell).
Dorset Portland area, adult, 4th-5th June, photo. (P. Gale *et al.*); same, 11th, 16th (G. Walbridge). Swanage, 5th June (P. Prestige). Lodmoor, juvenile, 27th-28th August (J. R. Smart *et al.*). Portland Bill, juvenile, 15th October (R. S. Ingram, B. E. & B. Slade *et al.*). The Grove, Portland, juvenile, 16th October (M. Snell, D. & G. Walbridge *et al.*).
Glamorgan Aberdare, adult, late August, photo. (J. Owens). Nash Point, juvenile, 23rd September (D. Bolt).
Hampshire Fleet, adult, 25th-26th June (J. M. Clark *et al.*). Calshot Marshes, juvenile, 4th-8th October (J. G. Ross *et al.*).
Highland Laide, Wester Ross, adult, 11th-16th June, photo. (P. King).
Lincolnshire Donna Nook, juvenile, trapped 21st September, photo. (J. R. Mawer, M. Sizer).
Moray & Nairn New Elgin, adult, date uncertain, July, photo. (Mr & Mrs Ogilvie per R. A. Mavor, R. Proctor).
Northeast Scotland Dyce, Aberdeen, adult, 9th June (I. Broadbent, Dr I. M. Phillips *et al.*). Buckie, adult, 18th June (Mr & Mrs J. Russell).
Northumberland Bedlington, adult, 6th-17th June, photo. (I. Fisher, M. P. Frankis, Mr Nesbitt *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plate 217). Seahouses, adult, 25th-28th June, photo. (I. Fisher, D. A. King *et al.*). Felton, adult, 6th-21st August, photo. (S. Sexton, M. Winter *et al.*) (fig. 7).
Orkney Evie, adult, 12th-20th June (I. Dillon *et al.*). Kirkwall, adult, 25th-26th June, photo. (C. J. Booth, I. Cameron *et al.*). North Ronaldsay, juvenile, 4th-12th September, photo. (R. McGregor *et al.*).
Pembrokeshire Skokholm, adult, 8th-10th June (G. Thompson *et al.*). Strumble Head, juvenile, 10th-12th September (S. E. Berry *et al.*).
Scilly St Mary's, adult, 17th July (K. Sawyer, C. Wood *et al.*); juvenile/first-winter, 24th October (D. Page *et al.*); present 7th-30th, photo. St Agnes, juvenile, 8th-18th November (M. E. Hicks, D. Page, N. Wheatley *et al.*).
Shetland Fair Isle, adult, 1st July (C. A. Holt, B. L. Skinner *et al.*). Sumburgh, first-winter, 7th-11th

October (D. Coutts, P. M. Ellis, I. Sandison *et al.*). Lerwick, juvenile, 19th-29th October (G. R. & D. Ball *et al.*).

Sussex, West Southwater, Horsham, juvenile, 21st-28th October, video. (D. J. & S. R. Cocker).

Yorkshire, North Ripon, first-summer, 15th-24th April, photo. (J. R. Mather, R. Rumbold, D. Woodford *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plate 143).

1999 Cornwall Helston, adult, 10th June (E. James).

1999 Suffolk Hollesley, adult, 20th June (A. Johnson); same, Trimley St Mary, 21st (J. Smith *et al.*).

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1998 Wexford Lady's Island Lake, first-year, trapped, 28th September to 24th October (*Irish Birds* 6: 400).

(Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia; winters India) An impressive mid-summer influx of at least 20 adult and first-summer birds, which was subsequently repeated in 2001. From January 2002, BBRC will no longer consider records of this species (see *Brit. Birds* 94: 290).



Stewart Sexton

Fig. 7. Adult Rosy Starling *Sturnus roseus*, Felton, Northumberland, August 2000.

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* (0, 6, 1)

Cornwall Cawsand, ♂, 12th November (D. Clegg, S. C. Madge *et al.*).

(Iberia, Northwest Africa, Sardinia and the Balkans east to Southwest Asia; mainly resident) Now that the long-staying individual in Cumbria has departed, this sighting marks a return to form for this major rarity.

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* (1, 115, 11)

Cornwall Porthgwarra, 27th-30th September (M. D. Wallace *et al.*). Kenidjack, 28th September to 1st October (M. S. Wallen *et al.*). Nanquidno, 5th October, photo. (I. M. Wilson *et al.*); present 1st-5th. Cot Valley, 18th October, photo. (I. M. Wilson *et al.*).

Devon Lundy, 5th-12th October, trapped 5th (R. M. Patient *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Stornoway, Lewis, 21st October (R. D. Wemyss).

Scilly St Mary's, 28th September (M. S. Scott *et al.*); another, 5th-6th October; presumed same, 8th-12th (C. Wills *et al.*). Bryher, 28th-29th September; presumed same, 4th-8th October, photo. (S. J. Dodgson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 93: plate 348). Tresco, 1st October (M. G. Telfer *et al.*). Gugh, 15th-20th October (D. Page *et al.*).

IRELAND

1992 Cork Mizen Head, 4th October (*Irish Birds* 6: 400).

1995 Cork Baltimore, 13th October (*Irish Birds* 6: 400).

(North America; winters Cuba and northern South America) Yet another multiple arrival of this elusive Nearctic passerine. While Scilly and Land's End were flooded with vireos, the real prize was, however, found elsewhere in the form of Europe's first Blue-winged Warbler *Vermivora pinus*, on Cape Clear Island, Co. Cork. The five Red-eyed Vireos on Scilly bring the islands' aggregate total to 38, with details of one, seen on St Agnes, still to be submitted.

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni* (30, 751, 4)

Caithness Mey, 9th-13th January (J. Smith *et al.*).
Outer Hebrides Stilligarry, North Uist, 13th December (G. Evans, A. Stevenson).
Shetland Hamister, Whalsay, 1st November (Dr B. Marshall *et al.*).
At Sea Sea area Forties, Oil installation *Buchan Alpha*, 57°54'N 00°02'E, 4th July (P. F. Baker).
1989 Shetland Fair Isle, first-winter ♂, 4th-18th October, trapped 5th, 14th, photo. (*Brit. Birds* 83: 488, plate 72), was *C. h. hornemanni*.
1996 Norfolk Belvoir Street, Norwich, ♂ and three others, 11th March (A. M. Stoddart *et al.*).
1999 Caithness Barrock, first-winter, probably *C. h. hornemanni*, 6th-7th February, video. (J. Smith *et al.*).

(Circumpolar Arctic; spreads erratically south in winter) The additional 1996 records bring the official total for that year to 277.

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* (40, 83, 1)

Cumbria Sedbergh, ♂, 15th-17th May, photo. (T. & K. Hannam).

(Northeast Europe, North-central Asia, northern America and Hispaniola; winters south and west of breeding range) A superb male, photographed at a garden bird feeder. This is the first May record since 3rd May 1931, when one was reported at Goathland, North Yorkshire.

Parrot Crossbill *Loxia pytyopsittacus* (10, 481, 0)

1962 Shetland Spiggie, ♂, dead, 12th October, photo., skin at National Museum of Scotland (per M. G. Pennington).

(Scandinavia and western Russia; periodically spreads south and west in winter) A fine piece of detective work.

Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator* (7, 3, 1)

Shetland Maywick, first-winter ♂, 9th November, photo. (P. Bentley, H. R. Harrop *et al.*) (plate 32).

(Scandinavia across Asia to North America) One of the classic rarities, and perhaps the most sought-after by today's generation of twitchers. The promise of more to come from the huge invasion into southern Scandinavia was not fulfilled.



Steve Young/Birdwatch

Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata* (0, 36, 1)

Lancashire & North Merseyside Seaforth, ♂, 2nd June, photo. (C. Sharratt, S. J. White *et al.*) (plate 275; *Brit. Birds* 93: plates 206 & 207).

(North America; winters northern South America) One of the real surprises of the spring, at a site more used to hosting Nearctic sparrows. This is the first spring record, and also the first to reach Europe in breeding plumage.

275. Male Blackpoll Warbler *Dendroica striata*, Seaforth, Merseyside, June 2000.

Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis* (1, 21, 2)

Caithness Duncansby, ♂, 26th-29th April (S. Laybourne, D. Watt).
At Sea Sea area Dogger, Oil installation *Maersk Curlew*, 56°44'N 01°17'E, ♂, 4th May, photo. (L. Simpson).

(North America) Although not previously published as such, all records prior to 1980 also involved males. In fact, a female has yet to be identified in Britain.

Cretzschmar's Bunting *Emberiza caesia* (0, 3, 0)

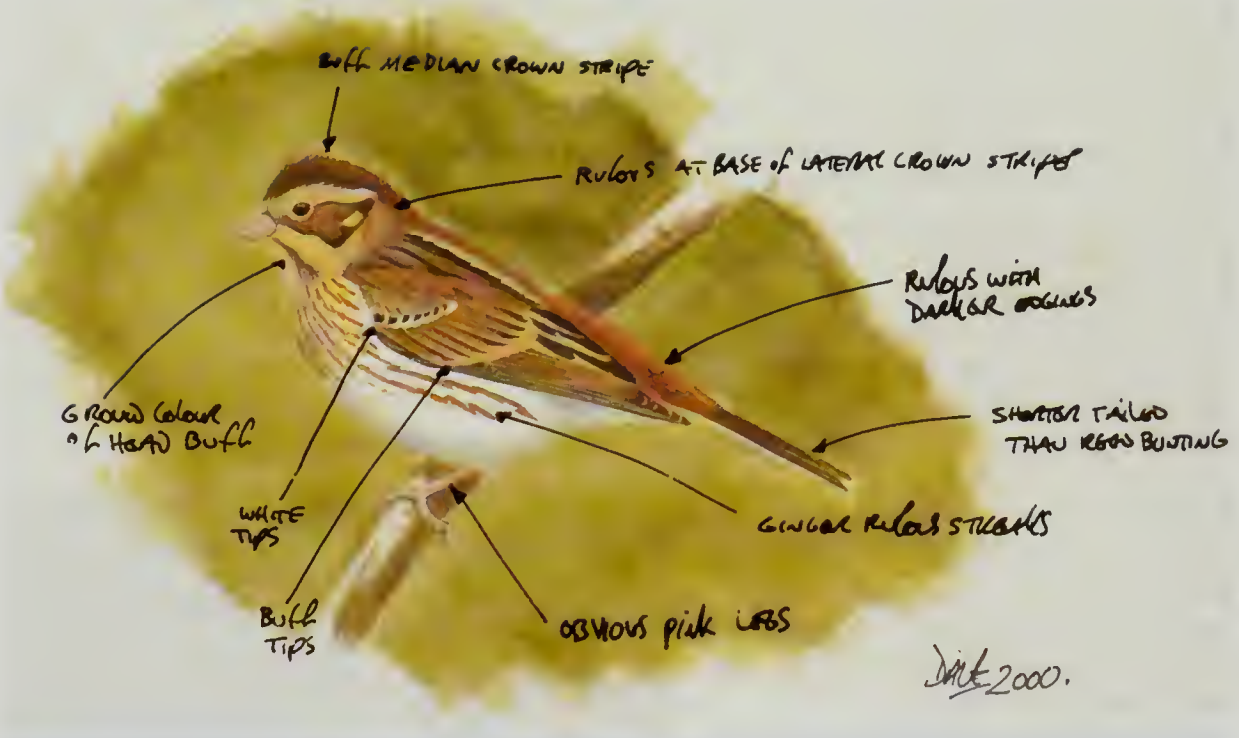
1998 Orkney Stronsay, ♂, 14th-18th May, photo. (W. Barkley, J. F. Holloway, S. J. Williams *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe and the Middle East) One of the star birds of 1998 finally makes it into the record books. An enviable discovery, which follows two previous spring records from Fair Isle, Shetland.

Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* (34, 395, 12)

Cleveland Old Cemetery, Hartlepool, 25th September, photo. (B. Beck, R. C. Taylor *et al.*).
Cornwall Between St Levan and Porthgwarra, 7th October (M. D. Wallace).
Denbigh Abergele, ♂, 7th April, dead 9th, photo., skin at British Museum (C. Williams per I. Higginson).
Norfolk Stiffkey, 2nd-9th October, photo. (D. Nurney, D. Ritchie *et al.*) (fig. 8).
Outer Hebrides St Kilda, ♂, 21st May; age/sex uncertain, 20th September; another, 25th September to 1st October (A. Robinson).
Scilly St Agnes, 10th October (K. A. Shaw, M. D. Wilson).
Shetland Northdale, Unst, 28th September (W. Dickson, C. C. Rodger); another, 17th October (K. Osborn). Fair Isle, 12th-13th October (D. N. Shaw *et al.*).
Yorkshire, East Spurn, ♂, 4th-5th April (D. P. Boyle *et al.*).
1999 Scilly St Agnes, 20th-21st October (N. Wheatley *et al.*).
IRELAND
1998 Cork Dursey Island, ♂, 2nd June (*Irish Birds* 6: 401).

(Northeast Europe across to North Asia; winters Turkestan to China and Japan) This species has now joined the 'BBRC 400 Club', one of only a handful of rarities to be seen on over 400 occasions in Britain since 1958.



Dave Nurney

Fig. 8. Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*, Stiffkey, Norfolk, October 2000.

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* (10, 196, 5)

Fife Balcomie, ♀, probably adult, 21st September, photo. (G. Owens, R. Shand *et al.*) (plate 276).
Outer Hebrides St Kilda, ♀ or first-winter, 5th-6th September (A. Robinson).
Scilly Tresco, ♀ or first-winter, 24th-26th September, photo. (R. A. Filby, D. Page *et al.*).
Shetland Skelberry, ♀ or first-winter, 2nd September (P. V. Harvey, Dr R. Riddington); ♀ or first-winter, 2nd-3rd October (A. E. Blake, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*).



Gerry Owens

1999 Suffolk Landguard, ♂, trapped 12th August (*Brit. Birds* 93: 564), now considered of captive origin.

IRELAND

1998 Donegal Tory Island, ♀ or first-winter, 21st September (*Irish Birds* 6: 401).

(Northern Europe across northern Asia; winters India and Southeast Asia) No details have yet been received of one photographed at Spurn. This individual appeared briefly, when it was captured on film, and then vanished, despite the presence of many birders. How many more slip by unnoticed?

276. Female, probably adult, Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*, Balcomie, Fife, September 2000.

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (9, 140, 13)

Argyll North Connel, ♂, 15th June (Miss J. Shepherd, G. & C. Watson).
Caernarfonshire Bardsey, ♂, 6th June (J. Moore, M. Richards, S. D. Stansfield); another, 30th (S. D. Stansfield).
Cornwall Nanjizal, ♂, 26th May (K. A. Wilson).
Devon Peter Tavy, ♂, 20th-26th May (M. R. Bellamy, R. A. Jones, S. Sykes).
Dorset Portland Bill, ♂, 16th July, photo. (M. Cade *et al.*).
Highland Isle of Eigg, Inverness-shire, ♂, 1st August (J. Chester, J. Williams). Glencoe, Inverness-shire, ♂, 27th-30th September, photo. (Mr & Mrs A. Lackey *et al.*).
Orkney Swannay, Birsay, ♂, 17th-18th June (K. & S. Fairclough *et al.*).
Shetland Norwick, Unst, ♂, 5th July to 1st August, photo. (W. Dickson, W. Priest, C. C. Rodger *et al.*). Sumburgh, ♂, 25th August (G. R. Ball *et al.*). Out Skerries, first-winter, 15th-21st September, photo. (P. M. Ellis, P. V. Harvey, Dr R. Riddington *et al.*).
Yorkshire, East Flamborough Head, ♂, 8th-12th July, photo. (N. A. Parker *et al.*).

(Southeast Europe and Southwest Asia; winters India) Another good year for this species, in fact the best since 1992 when there were 13. Although the odd individual can be traced to captive origin, surely most of these are genuine vagrants; records are becoming increasingly regular. A pair bred in France in 2000, fledging three young (*Brit. Birds* 94: 429).

Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* (0, 22, 1)

Shetland Out Skerries, first-winter, 21st-22nd September, photo. (P. Forrest, M. J. McKee, C. Turner, T. Warwick) (plate 277; *Brit. Birds* 93: plate 366.

1996 Scilly Tresco, 11th October, presumed same, Bryher, 12th-15th (*Brit. Birds* 90: 517), first noted, Bryher, 8th (C. Wood).

(North America; winters Peru to southern Brazil and northern Argentina) The fourth for Shetland, compared with 12 on Scilly.



Michael McKee

277. Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*, Out Skerries, Shetland, September 2000.

Appendix 1. Category D species accepted (see *Ibis* 136: 253)

Falcated Duck *Anas falcata* (0, 15, 1)

Orkney Shapinsay, ♂, found shot, 24th November, skin at National Museum of Scotland, photo. (I. Dillon *et al.*).

(Eastern Siberia; winters North India, Japan, Korea)

Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris* (0, 12, 1)

Norfolk Kelling, 23rd April (Dr M. P. Taylor *et al.*).

(Mediterranean region of Europe, North Africa and Middle East; winters locally or south to Central and West Africa)

Daurian Starling *Sturnus sturninus* (0, 3, 0)

1998 Highland Durness, Sutherland, age uncertain, 24th-27th September, photo. (A. Vittery *et al.*).

(East Asia; winters southeast Asia and Java)

Appendix 2. List of records not accepted

This list contains all current records not accepted after circulation to the Committee. It does not include a) those withdrawn by the observer(s) without circulation, after discussion with the Hon. Secretary; b) those which, even if circulated, were not attributed by the observer(s) to any definite species; c) those mentioned in 'Recent reports' in *British Birds* if full details were unobtainable; or d) certain escapes.

In the vast majority of cases, the record was not accepted because we were not convinced that the identification was fully established; only in a very few cases were we satisfied that a mistake had been made.

2000 White-billed Diver Cape Cornwall, Cornwall, 20th October. **Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel** Portland Bill, Dorset, 13th August. **Wilson's Storm-petrel** Towan Head, Cornwall, 9th July; Sea area Plymouth, two, 17th August. **Swinhoe's Storm-petrel** Sea area Malin, 5th September. **Cattle Egret** Near Dunblane, Forth Area, 7th May. **Great White Egret** Littlehampton, West Sussex, two, 4th August; Sheffield Park, East Sussex, 22nd November. **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* Glen More, Mull, Argyll, 16th May. **Brent Goose** *B. b. nigricans* Holkham, Norfolk, 10th December. **American Wigeon** Abermenai, Anglesey, 28th September. **Ferruginous Duck** Stanford Reservoir, Leicestershire/Northamptonshire, four, 6th September. **Lesser Scaup** Stithians Reservoir, Cornwall, 27th January; Meare Heath, Somerset, 16th September; Boultham Mere, Lincolnshire, 1st October; Ulva Pools, Argyll, 13th October. **Black Kite** Butler's Marston, Warwickshire, 7th April; Weybourne, Norfolk, 8th April; Morden, Dorset, 27th April; Banchory, Northeast Scotland, 28th April; Middlemarsh, Dorset, 2nd May; St Buryan, Cornwall, 13th May; Dursley, Gloucestershire, 20th May; Unstead, Surrey, 16th July; Blacklands Lane, Isle of Wight, 17th July; Ballard Down, Dorset, 3rd September. **Short-toed Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus* Church Norton, West Sussex, 11th May. **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* Crediton, Devon, 2nd January; Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex, 24th May. **Red-footed Falcon** Nene Washes, Cambridgeshire, 13th May; Whitestone Point, Whitby, North Yorkshire, 14th May; Weybourne, Norfolk, 21st September. **Gyr Falcon** West Yell, Shetland, 25th February; St Kilda, Outer Hebrides, 8th April; Haslemere, Surrey, 12th April; Scarborough, North Yorkshire, 27th August; Saltholme Pools, Cleveland, 1st October. **Collared Pratincole** Llandudno, Caernarfonshire, 30th June to 1st July. **Semipalmated Plover** *Charadrius semipalmatus* Machrihanish, Argyll, 5th July. **Pacific Golden Plover** Holland Haven, Essex, 1st October. **Sociable Lapwing** Druridge, Northumberland, 22nd April. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** Blyth Estuary, Northumberland, 27th August; Monks' Wall, Kent, 20th October. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** Oare Marshes, Kent, 9th October; Colchester, Essex, 23rd October. **Great Snipe** North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 20th September, 15th October; Ringasta, Shetland, 26th September; Papa Westray, Orkney, 21st October. **Dowitcher sp.** Marshside Marsh, Lan-

cashire & North Merseyside, 7th August. **Marsh Sandpiper** Atherfield Green, Isle of Wight, 29th July; Alaw Estuary, Anglesey, 3rd October. **Lesser Yellowlegs** Scarborough, North Yorkshire, 17th October. **Spotted Sandpiper** Poole Harbour, Dorset, 15th October. **Franklin's Gull** Potteric Carr, South Yorkshire, 4th January; Ellesmere, Shropshire, 15th-16th January; Staines Reservoirs, Surrey, 1st May; Montrose, Angus & Dundee, 11th September. **Bonaparte's Gull** Icklesham, East Sussex, 29th April; Camel Estuary, Cornwall, 26th May; Channel View, near Clevedon, Avon, 9th December. **Gull-billed Tern** Holme, Norfolk, 1st September; Cape Cornwall, Cornwall, 19th October; Weybourne, Norfolk, 26th October. **Caspian Tern** Holy Island, Northumberland, 2nd August. **Royal Tern** *Sterna maxima* St Mary's, Scilly, intermittently, 18th-30th July. **Whiskered Tern** Burgh Castle, Norfolk, 7th May. **Brünnich's Guillemot** Dungeness, Kent, 25th April. **Eurasian Scops Owl** Compton Dando, Avon, 10th April. **Snowy Owl** Ballater, Northeast Scotland, 26th December. **Pallid Swift** Seaford, East Sussex, 16th August. **Pacific Swift** *Apus pacificus* Fairford, Gloucestershire, 26th May. **Crag Martin** *Ptyonoprogne rupestris* Farne Islands, Northumberland, 25th April. **Cliff Swallow** Marline Valley, Hastings, East Sussex, 1st October. **Olive-backed Pipit** Cuckmere Valley, East Sussex, 14th November. **Red-throated Pipit** Fair Isle, Shetland, 23rd-26th September; Conwy, Caernarfonshire, 3rd-5th October; St Mary's, Scilly, 6th October; Marazion, Cornwall, 7th October; Southwold, Suffolk, 17th October. **Citrine Wagtail** Willington Gravel-pits, Bedfordshire, 17th October. **Thrush Nightingale** Burwick, South Ronaldsay, Orkney, 20th September. **Common Stonechat** *S. t. maura/stejnegeri* Lyng/Easthaugh, Norfolk, 13th April; Fiddlers Ferry, Cheshire, 15th-22nd October. **Black-eared Wheatear** Blakeney Point, Norfolk, 9th September; Bury, Greater Manchester, 18th September; The Lizard, Cornwall, 20th October. **Desert Wheatear** Hares Creek, Suffolk, 4th September. **Siberian Thrush** *Zoothera sibirica* Ashlawn Cutting Nature Reserve, Warwickshire, 7th December. **Grey-cheeked Thrush** *Catharus minimus* Papa Westray, Orkney, 26th October; Bangor, Caernarfonshire, 3rd-4th November. **Dark-throated Thrush** *Turdus ruficollis ruficollis* Beaumaris, Anglesey, 29th April. **American Robin** *Turdus migratorius* Hitchin, Hertfordshire, 10th April; Heyshott, West Sussex, 18th May. **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola* Farne Islands, Northumberland, 19th August. **Savi's Warbler** Loch of Strathbeg, Northeast Scotland, 28th-30th April. **Paddyfield Warbler** Fair Isle, Shetland, 22nd September. **Blyth's Reed Warbler** Lowestoft, Suffolk, 15th-18th October. **Booted Warbler** Papa Westray, Orkney, 1st-3rd October. **Sardinian Warbler** St Mary's, Scilly, 18th April. **Greenish Warbler** Syderstone, Norfolk, 30th July; Voe, Shetland, 28th August; Holkham Meals, Norfolk, 31st August. **Eastern/Western Bonelli's Warbler** Frampton-on-Severn, Gloucestershire, 27th July. **Penduline Tit** Filsham, East Sussex, 30th January. **Arctic Redpoll** Pitsford Reservoir, Northamptonshire, 25th January. **Parrot Crossbill** Glen Markie, Angus & Dundee, five, 3rd December. **Ovenbird** *Seiurus aurocapillus* Peel, Isle of Man, 12th October.

1999 Wilson's Storm-petrel Strumble Head, Pembrokeshire, 9th September. **Black Duck** Skelbo, Highland, 26th October to 25th January 2000. **Canvasback** Monks' Wall, Kent, 10th-11th June. **Harlequin Duck** *Histrionicus histrionicus* Peterhead, Northeast Scotland, 6th November. **Short-toed Eagle** Pagham Harbour, West Sussex, 23rd October. **Red-footed Falcon** Spurn, East Yorkshire, 3rd June; Worth Matravers, Dorset, 10th September. **Little Crake** Woolston Eyes, Cheshire, 19th-20th June. **American Golden Plover** Browndown, Hampshire, 3rd September; Brora, Highland, 22nd September; Needs Ore Point, Hampshire, 31st October to 28th November. **Pacific Golden Plover** Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, 3rd October. **Killdeer Plover** *Charadrius vociferus* St Mary's, Scilly, 31st October. **Baird's Sandpiper** Davidstow Airfield, Cornwall, 7th October. **Red-necked Stint** Point of Ayr, Flintshire, 16th May; North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 17th May. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** Elmley, Kent, 29th May; North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 1st June. **Great Snipe** Irt Estuary, Cumbria, 26th July. **Laughing Gull** Woolston Eyes, Cheshire, 1st May; Pennington, Hampshire, 16th May; Milford-on-Sea, Hampshire, 23rd September. **Bonaparte's Gull** Steart, Somerset, 13th July. **Ross's Gull** Lothbeg Point, Highland, 21st September. **Gull-billed Tern** Spurn, East Yorkshire, 3rd July. **Lesser Crested Tern** *Sterna bengalensis* Selsey Bill, West Sussex, 9th May. **Bridled Tern** *Sterna anaethetus* Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, 14th August. **White-winged Black Tern** Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, 11th August. **Alpine Swift** Peveril Down, Dorset, 4th June; Swan Village, West Midlands, 3rd August; Higham,

Barnsley, South Yorkshire, 27th September; Beadnell, Northumberland, two, 29th September. **Olive-backed Pipit** Marloes, Pembrokeshire, 19th October. **Pied Wheatear** Happisburgh, Norfolk, 2nd October. **Black-eared Wheatear** Eyemouth, Borders, 1st May. **Desert Wheatear** St Kilda, Outer Hebrides, 20th-23rd October. **Savi's Warbler** Stanpit Marsh, Dorset, 5th August.
1998 Herald Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana* Dungeness, Kent, 4th January. **Wilson's Storm-petrel** Pendeen, Cornwall, 10th September. **Saker Falcon** *Falco cherrug* Unst, Shetland, 10th, 28th-29th January, 27th April. **Bonaparte's Gull** Near Castletown, Isle of Man, 25th July. **Alpine Swift** Weybourne, Norfolk, 12th May. **Pechora Pipit** *Anthus gustavi* Trimley Marshes, Suffolk, 14th October. **Blyth's Reed Warbler** Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, 29th September. **Dusky Warbler** Draycote Water, Warwickshire, 30th November. **White-crowned Sparrow** *Zonotrichia leucophrys* Middle Hope Nature Reserve, Avon, 15th November.
1997 Little Bittern Near White Horse Common, Norfolk, 31st May. **Saker Falcon** Fetlar, Shetland, 16th December. **White-winged Black Tern** Hogganfield Loch, Clyde, 7th September. **Pacific Swift** St Mary's, Scilly, 23rd September. **Pine Grosbeak** Moreton, Cheshire, 26th April.
1996 Lesser Striped Swallow *Hirundo abyssinica* Hurst Green, East Sussex, 17th October.
1995 Little Shearwater Sheringham, Norfolk, 19th September. **Lesser White-fronted Goose** Near Sandygate, Isle of Man, 19th February, 18th March. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** South Huish, Devon, 8th-19th October. **Black-eared Wheatear** Great Orme's Head, Caernarfonshire, 19th-21st October.
1994 Blyth's Pipit Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, 30th April.
1993 Hume's Warbler Bridlington, East Yorkshire, 11th February.
1991 River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* Sea area Fair Isle, 8th October. **Hume's Warbler** Stoneleigh, Surrey, 17th February to 2nd March.
1988 Hume's Warbler Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Leicestershire, 10th January to 18th February.
1971 Black-browed Albatross Looe, Cornwall, November. **Red-footed Falcon** Thursley Common, Surrey, 7th-8th September.

Appendix 3. List of records not accepted but identification proved

This list provides a permanent record of those occurrences which, usually on the grounds of likely escape from captivity, find no place in any category, but which may, at some future date, merit further consideration. It does not include (a) any record of a species for which natural vagrancy is wholly unlikely or (b) those records of presumed escapes already mentioned in the main text of this or earlier Reports.

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa* Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, ♂, 20th-27th April 2000. **White-headed Duck** *Oxyura leucocephala* Abberton Reservoir, Essex, ♀, 17th September to 28th October 1999. **Pallas's Rosefinch** *Carpodacus roseus* Fair Isle, Shetland, ♀ or first-summer, 12th-17th May 2000, trapped 12th. **Long-tailed Rosefinch** *Uragus sibiricus* Calf of Man, Isle of Man, ♀, 30th April to 16th July 2000, trapped 30th April.

Appendix 4. List of records remaining under consideration

This list is not intended to be complete. Some decisions may have been arrived at and notified to County Recorders/observers prior to the publication of this Report.

2000 Southern Giant Petrel *Macronectes giganteus* Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, 16th August. **American Golden Plover** Holm, Orkney, 7th September. **Pacific Golden Plover** South Uist, Outer Hebrides, 31st July. **Broad-billed Sandpiper** Endrick Mouth, Clyde, 17th May; Nosterfield, North Yorkshire, 15th-16th September. **Great Snipe** North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 24th September; Fazakerley, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 18th November to 2001. **Marsh Sandpiper** Filey, North Yorkshire, 30th July. **Solitary Sandpiper** Hayle, Cornwall, 28th September. **Spotted Sandpiper** Steart, Somerset, 31st August to 3rd September. **Slender-billed Gull** Cley, Norfolk,

22nd May. **Yellow Wagtail** *M. f. feldegg* Ripon, North Yorkshire, 12th May. **Common Stonechat** *S. t. maura/stejnegeri* Spurn, East Yorkshire, 16th September. **Iberian Chiffchaff** Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, 2nd October. **Collared Flycatcher** Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, 26th September. **Lesser Grey Shrike** Catfirth, Shetland, 12th September.

1999 Little Shearwater St Mary's, Scilly, 18th September (*Brit. Birds* 93: 567). **Great Snipe** North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 23rd-24th September (*Brit. Birds* 93: 567). **Blyth's Pipit** Happisburgh, Norfolk, 25th-28th September (*Brit. Birds* 93: 567). **Yellow Wagtail** *M. f. feldegg* Maylandsea, Essex, 24th May to 4th June. **Pied/Black-eared Wheatear** Deerness, Orkney, 16th October (*Brit. Birds* 93: 567).

1998 Lesser Scaup Ham Road Gravel-pits, Kent, 17th December to 2nd January 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 567). **Wilson's Snipe** *Gallinago (gallinago) delicata* St Mary's, Scilly, 9th October to 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 567). **Slender-billed Curlew** *Numenius tenuirostris* Druridge Pools, Northumberland, 5th-7th May (*Brit. Birds* 93: 567). **Isabelline Wheatear** Bryher, Scilly, 30th October to 1st November (*Brit. Birds* 93: 567). **Black-headed Bunting** North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 27th-28th September (*Brit. Birds* 93: 567).

1997 Wilson's Snipe St Mary's, Scilly, 19th October (*Brit. Birds* 93: 567).

1996 South Polar Skua *Catharacta maccormicki* Dawlish Warren, Devon, January, February; presumed same, South Bexington, Dorset, January, February.

1995 Blyth's Pipit St Mary's, Scilly, 9th-10th October (*Brit. Birds* 93: 567).

1993 South Polar Skua Sea area Sole, 26th August (*Brit. Birds* 93: 567).

1988 Blyth's Pipit Fair Isle, Shetland, 13th-22nd October (*Brit. Birds* 93: 567).

1962 Olivaceous Warbler St Agnes, Scilly, 30th September to 2nd October (*Brit. Birds* 93: 567).

1961 Olivaceous Warbler St Agnes, Scilly, 3rd-4th October (*Brit. Birds* 93: 567).

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Secretary: M. J. Rogers, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ

Requests

Helm identification guide to gulls

The authors of the forthcoming guide *Gulls of Europe, Asia & North America*, to be published by Christopher Helm in spring 2002, urgently require photographs of the following species for possible publication:

Relict Gull *Larus relictus*; Franklin's Gull *L. pipixcan* (photos of all ages required, but especially adult summer); Sabine's Gull *L. sabini* (winter plumage, and adults in flight); Bonaparte's Gull *L. philadelphia* (flight shots and juveniles); Brown-headed Gull *L. brunnicephalus*; Grey-headed Gull *L. cirrocephalus*; Common Gull *L. canus* (of the form *kamtschatschensis*); Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea*; Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* (of the form *pollicaris*); Red-legged Kittiwake *R. brevirostris*; and East Asian taxa of 'large white-headed gulls'.

All contributions will be fully acknowledged, and a fee will be paid for all photographs published. Please send any suitable photographs direct to Klaus Malling Olsen, Smørumvej 221, 2.t.v, DK 2700 Bronshoj, Denmark; e-mail: calidris@worldonline.dk

European Honey-buzzards 2001

As a follow-up to the article on the European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus* survey 2000 and 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 94: 143-144), those observers who have had access to the countryside in 2001, and who have records of honey-buzzards, are requested to submit these as soon as possible. The records should be sent to Dr Malcolm Ogilvie, Secretary of the RBBP, Glencairn, Bruichladdich, Isle of Islay PA49 7UN. Please state also which of the criteria listed in the above article were used to establish breeding status.

Notes

A measure of reduced autumn emigration through Inner London

The birds of Regent's Park, Inner London, have recently been described in detail by Green (1999). In the course of that book's preparation, the thought arose of making a historical comparison between our original migrant records, from the 1960s, and those of Tony Duckett and Dave Johnson, from the late 1990s. To this end, we have assembled fully comparable samples of the early-autumn migration figures of 15 summer visitors that occur only on passage in the Park. These cover two periods (each of three years) from the 1960s, and the four years 1996-99. The comparisons are considered valid, since methods, timing of counts, habitats visited and other factors remained comparable throughout; in addition, coverage in the late 1990s, by two very competent observers actually working in the Park, was at least as thorough as that during the earlier years.

Table 1 displays the trends in migrant numbers in these periods; we have shown 1969 figures separately, in order to demonstrate the massive drop in that year (see below). Although we have used the oft-discredited quotient of 'bird-days' in the comparison, we would stress that off-passage stays, even of night migrants, in Regent's Park are almost always short, for example, 1.1 to 1.2 days for warblers (Sylviidae) in the early 1960s (DIMW, unpublished). The figures in the table are, therefore, much closer to actual numbers of individuals than are the bird-day totals at coastal observatories.

If one looks back over four decades, two events stand out. Recognised but unexplained at the time, the sudden reduction in migrant totals by almost 58% in 1969 followed the onset of the drought in the African Sahel, and the resultant population crashes of several summer visitors that winter there. It is, however, the marked overall collapse in migrant numbers over the last third of the twentieth century that is so striking. Of the fifteen species, only the Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, the Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava* and the Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix* remain apparently undiminished, and only the Common Chiffchaff *P. collybita* is now substantially commoner than it was in the 1960s.

In the early 1960s, serial occurrences of recently arrived East Coast or drift migrants, such as Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* and Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*, were occasionally noted in early September. It is possible, therefore, that the declines in migrant numbers reflect not only the lower total numbers of many British breeding species, but also a thinner penetration of Britain by their European counterparts.

Table 1. Trends in early-autumn numbers of 15 migrants, Regent's Park, London, in 1960s and late 1990s.

	Average bird-days per annum 1st Aug-15th Sep			
	1962-64	1967-68	1969	1996-99
Turtle Dove *Streptopelia turtur*	16.3	7.0	1.0	0.3
Sand Martin *Riparia riparia*	7.0	5.0	1.0	4.8
Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*	102.3	87.5	44.0	100.0
Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*	1.7	2.5	0.0	1.3
Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*	7.3	26.5	12.0	11.8
Common Redstart *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*	10.0	8.0	4.0	1.5
Whinchat *Saxicola rubetra*	9.7	13.5	3.0	1.3
Northern Wheatear *Oenanthe oenanthe*	24.0	19.5	4.0	3.5
Lesser Whitethroat *Sylvia curruca*	20.3	31.0	9.0	6.5
Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis*	48.7	57.0	5.0	7.0
Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*	23.7	17.5	10.0	7.3
Wood Warbler *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*	2.3	1.5	1.0	4.8
Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*	51.7	69.5	32.0	97.0
Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*	383.0	360.0	173.0	197.0
Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*	27.3	16.5	6.0	1.8
Totals (15 species)	735.3	722.5	305.0	445.5
Index	100	98.3	41.5	60.6

In summary, for every 100 migrants of the 15 species that passed over or recuperated in Regent's Park in the early autumns of 1962-64, only 61 have appeared in the late 1990s. Indeed, the figure in 1999 was only 42, the same as that in 1969 following the drought in the Sahelian winter quarters.

R. C. Green and D. I. M. Wallace
Flat 2, 28 Arkwright Road, London NW3 6BH

Reference

Green, R. 1999. *The Birds of Regent's Park*. London.

Birds using street lights in Spain to prolong their day

In Torremolinos, Málaga province, Spain, it is not uncommon for several species of bird to prolong their day beyond sunset and before sunrise with the aid of sodium street lights. Both Robins *Erithacus rubecula* and Black Redstarts *Phoenicurus ochruros*, which winter in the town, are commonly active up to 90 minutes before sunrise, and occasionally earlier. Both species appear to use artificial lighting solely for the purpose of claiming and maintaining territories, particularly in October and November, when disputes are of maximum intensity. Blackbirds *Turdus merula* are also regularly active before sunrise in patches of artificial light, using the time both for feeding and for limited territorial assertion; in the early spring, males frequently sing before dawn. In April and May each year, Pallid *Apus pallidus* and Common Swifts *A. apus* are recorded up to 120 minutes after sunset, feeding by street lights alongside small pipistrelle bats *Pipistrellus*.

The most interesting observation so far is of a Spotted Flycatcher *Muscicapa striata* which was seen feeding by street lights on many occasions in July and October-November 1998. Although there was a hiatus between the two periods of sightings, it seems likely that the same individual was involved. The species is a summer visitor to the area, breeding in the town, and typically present from mid May to mid September, although migrants are occasionally seen until late October. The individual in question used just two perches under one street lamp, one on each side of, and about 2.5 m above, a busy thoroughfare. Neither perch appeared to be used during the day. In July, I saw the flycatcher feeding only after sunset; from 17th October to 11th November (an unusually late sighting), it fed both before sunrise and after sunset, but with a clear preference for the latter. In the autumn, it very seldom appeared in adjacent gardens during the day, even though the species is frequently encountered here in summer. In July, this 'nocturnal foraging' typically continued for 60-80 minutes after sunset, while in autumn the flycatcher commonly fed for up to 60 minutes both before sunrise and after sunset. It spent longer feeding after sunset up to 1st November (as much as 235 minutes after sunset on one occasion), but after this date this behaviour occurred for shorter periods and was more sporadic.

Clearly, this Spotted Flycatcher was exploiting the presence of insects attracted by the street lamps. In July, the weather was fine and warm, and there should have been no shortage of insects during daylight hours; perhaps the extra foraging time enabled the adult to remain in better condition while rearing a brood. In 1998, I did not observe fledged young until August, although they normally appear in mid July. The reappearance in autumn of what was presumably the same individual is of particular interest. Again, the weather was fine and warm, with no lack of aerial insects. A possible explanation for the behaviour at this season may be that migration was delayed for some reason, and the chance to exploit a food source without competition appeared attractive.

Andrew M. Paterson
Edificio San Gabriel 2-4 °-A, c/. Escritor Adolfo Reyes, E-29620 Torremolinos, Spain

EDITORIAL COMMENT Nocturnal activity under artificial lighting is by no means unusual, even in Britain (see, for example, *Brit. Birds* 71: 83-84 & 88), but this sequence of observations from Torremolinos illustrates the range of species which use the opportunity to extend their natural day, and the range of behaviours employed in such circumstances.

Letters

Further declines in an urban population of House Sparrows

Autumn bird counts have been carried out periodically in Kensington Gardens, London (the third-largest of the Inner London parks, at 115.8 ha), since 1925. The counts, all made in November, show that there has been a continuous decline in the number of House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* in the park (Sanderson 1996; Summers-Smith 1999), whereas the counts of other species have fluctuated, and the number of species encountered has almost doubled since 1925. The most recent survey, in November 2000, demonstrates the continuing collapse of the local sparrow population (table 1). Observations during the breeding season confirm the decline in House Sparrow numbers at this site. For example, in 1967, when House Sparrows were included in a Common Bird Census of the Gardens, the lowest estimate of the number of breeding pairs was 160 (Sanderson 1967). In 2000, only six nests were located.

The decline in the House Sparrow population in Central London is perhaps matched in other large conurbations in Britain. A similar situation has been reported in Edinburgh, where, in Princes Street Gardens, this species is now about ten times less numerous than it was in 1982, although, as in Kensington Gardens, other common species have not shown a similar decline (Dott & Brown 2000).

Summers-Smith (1999) described the key factors which have been put forward to explain the sparrow's decline, in both urban and rural areas, and concluded that the reduced availability of invertebrate food for rearing young was the most important reason for the sparrow's demise. I should like, however, to suggest that, in Kensington Gardens, two other factors may have contributed to the decline. Personal observations indicate that those sparrows which still survive are no longer so tame as they once were. Instead of coming to the hand for food, they prefer to remain in cover, appearing only briefly to take food thrown down for them. Such behaviour may indicate that they are concerned about predators, and it was during the early 1990s that Eurasian Sparrowhawks *Accipiter nisus* began nesting in the Kensington and Chelsea area. That species is certainly a more efficient predator of sparrows than is the Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus*, which it has largely replaced in Central London. Secondly, in 2000, a dead sparrowhawk in the gardens of Buckingham Palace was found to be heavily infested with *Trichomonas*, a parasite carried by Feral Pigeons *Columba livia*. Sparrows have not yet been found to carry the parasite, but the risk of cross-infection has not, so far as I am aware, been properly investigated.

References

Dott, H. E. M., & Brown, A. W. 2000. A major decline in House Sparrows in central Edinburgh. *Scot. Birds* 21: 61-68.

Sanderson, R. F. 1967. Changing status of birds in Kensington Gardens. *London Bird Report* 32: 63-80.

— 1996. Autumn bird counts in Kensington Gardens. *London Bird Report* 60: 170-176.

Summers-Smith, J. D. 1999. Current status of the House Sparrow in Britain. *British Wildlife* 10: 381-386.

Table 1. Autumn counts of House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* and other bird species in Kensington Gardens, London, 1925-2000.
Totals for 'Other birds' do not include Feral Pigeons *Columba livia*.

	1925	1948	1966	1975	1995	2000
Number of House Sparrows counted	2,603	885	642	544	81	8
Percentage decline since previous count		*66%*	*27%*	*15%*	*85%*	*90%*
Other birds	1,379	1,064	1,527	1,775	1,277	1,270
Total number of species recorded	27	25	28	44	42	50

Roy Sanderson
15 Stephenson Drive, East Grinstead, West Sussex RH19 4AP

A suggestion for research into the decline of the House Sparrow

Earlier this year, I visited Washington DC, in the United States. While walking in the city, in Foggy Bottom, Georgetown, and around the White House and the Smithsonian buildings, the abundant local population of House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* was immediately noticeable. There were small parties in most shrubberies and gardens. Considerable dust-bathing activity was taking place, for which the sparrows chose dry areas under small ornamental shrubs.

The sparrow population in Washington appeared far healthier than the London one, although, according to the American Bird Conservancy's field guide *All the Birds of North America* (Griggs 1997), it has been 'slightly declining in the East since 1985'.

Why does this species still do well in US cities but not in British ones? The ecological niche which it occupies in America seems very similar, while the competition from crows (Corvidae), Common Starlings *Sturnus vulgaris*, grackles *Quiscalus* and the small seed-eating passerines which have adapted to city-centre life is not dissimilar to that in Britain. One thought occurred to me, namely that perhaps the increased 'hardening' of the landscape of British cities (where verges and flower-beds have been replaced with concrete, stone and patios), and the reduction of open shrubberies in public parks, combined with an increase in rainfall, might reduce the sparrows' access to dusting areas.

This is, however, an unsupported notion based on very limited observations. All the same, there may be some value in analysing the behaviour and the environment of American House Sparrows compared with British ones, in order to investigate whether the differences may help to explain the latter's decline.

Edward Mayer
28 Yale Court, Honeybourne Road, London NW6 1JG

Looking back in error

Perhaps some items in 'Looking back' are meant to show how much smarter we now are. Maybe all readers see that. Or am I missing the point? I was sure that there would be instant reaction to the May 2001 snippet from 75 years ago on 'Breeding of the Icterine Warbler [*Hippolais icterina*] in England' (*Brit. Birds* 94: 255), but no! Reprinted without comment, this record was comprehensively demolished by Dougal Andrew only four years ago (*Brit. Birds* 90: 187-189), with editorial approval.

Andrew T. Macmillan
20 Garscube Terrace, Edinburgh EH12 6BQ

EDITORIAL COMMENT Andrew Macmillan is perfectly correct, and we could have added a comment at the time. We do, however, feel that the purpose of 'Looking back' is really to demonstrate how much ornithology has changed over the decades, while at the same time drawing attention both to the early discovery of phenomena that we now take for granted and to some of the understandable errors made in the past. Do we need to append editorial comment to these snippets? Perhaps readers would care to tell us what they think.

Monthly Marathon



Volker Konrad

278. Bridled Tern *Sterna anaethetus*, Hong Kong, July 1997.

The bird flying away from us in Monthly Marathon photo number 179 (plate 199, repeated here as plate 278) shows extremely long wings, and, although the tail is spread, the long outer feathers suggest a deeply forked tail, too. Pratincoles *Glareola*, swallows *Hirundo* and terns *Sterna* are really the only species that show both of these features, though no Western Palearctic swallow is uniformly dark above with white outer tail feathers, and all pratincoles are brown. Very few terns fit this description, either, and we have to consider species which occur primarily outside our area to find a match. Three possibilities spring to mind: Bridled Tern *S. anaethetus*, Sooty Tern *S. fuscata* and, perhaps, Aleutian Tern *S. aleutica*. All are vagrants to northwest Europe, but the first two are familiar to visitors to tropical seabird sites such as Seychelles or the Great Barrier Reef, while the last requires a visit to Alaska. Aleutian Tern, however, has an all-white tail, while the upperparts are not so dark as on the bird in the photo, the overall appearance being much more like a cross between a Bridled and a Common Tern *S. hirundo*.

Only the two tropical species could really fit the bill. Sooty is generally blacker above than Bridled and shows less contrast between the upper mantle and the solid black crown and nape. There is also less contrast between the blackish wing-coverts and the remiges. The pattern of the white forehead/supercilium is quite distinctive, with Sooty showing a triangular white forehead patch, while Bridled has a white line which extends back to just behind the eye, although this photograph shows insufficient detail for us to judge that feature accurately. The pattern of the tail feathers varies considerably on Bridled Tern, with Atlantic birds showing much more white on T4-T5 than do most other races (Red Sea through to the Pacific). Sooty Tern typically shows just a broad white outer web on the outermost tail feather (T6). The white in the tail of the bird in the photo is fairly restricted, which favours Sooty Tern, or perhaps a Bridled from the east, but the way in which the dark grey tones of the mantle, rump and wing-coverts contrast with the black crown and remiges fits Bridled better. This tern was photographed by Volker Konrad in July 1997, in Tolo Harbour, Hong Kong, which confirms that it is from an eastern population, and also that the reduced white in the tail is compatible with Bridled Tern, which is the correct solution to this leg of the marathon.

This proved to be one of those rounds in which contestants either went straight to the right answer (and 77% of entrants did just that) or set off on the wrong track completely. So, there were, surprisingly, no votes at all for Sooty Tern, one or two for other species of tern (including Aleutian Tern), and a few answers that were way off the mark, including White-tailed



279. 'Monthly Marathon'. Photo no. 182. Thirtieth stage in eleventh 'Marathon' or first stage in twelfth. Identify the species. Read the rules (see page 55), then send in your answer *on a postcard* to Monthly Marathon, c/o The Banks, Mountfield, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY, *or by e-mail* to editor@britishbirds.co.uk, *to arrive by 30th November 2001.*

continued on page 511

News and comment

Compiled by Bob Scott and Wendy Dickson

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of *British Birds*

The Osprey soars

We previously reported that a new journal, *The Osprey*, would be appearing in 2001 and that this would coincide with the demise of the respective journals of the three ornithological societies of the armed services (*Brit. Birds* 93: 462). The Navy, or, more correctly, the Royal Naval Birdwatching Society (RNBS), was unhappy with our report, since it was the intention that the RNBS journal *Sea Swallow* would continue. We apologise for our mistake. *The Osprey* is now on the wing, with contributions from all three service societies, but *Sea Swallow* continues to document reports of birds seen at sea. Contact: Army Ornithological Society, Lt Col. P. S. Bennett, Defence Logistics Organisation, Main Building Room 7261, Whitehall, London SW1A 2HB; RAF Ornithological Society, General Secretary, RAFOS, MOD DE(C) Conservation, Blandford House, Farnborough Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2HA; Royal Naval Birdwatching Society, Col. P. J. S. Smith RM (retired), 19 Downlands Way, South Wonston, Winchester, Hampshire SO21 3HS.

Thank-you, Ken...

After 37 years on the Behaviour Notes Panel, K. E. L. (Ken) Simmons has decided to step down. This is not quite a record for long service to *BB*, since his good friend Derek Goodwin beat him by an extra three years (see below), but it is, nevertheless, an outstanding contribution to the journal. Ken may be more familiar to our readers as the co-editor (with Stanley Cramp) of volumes 1-3 of *BWP*, for which Ken wrote many of the 'Social Pattern and Behaviour' and 'Voice' accounts. Thereafter, he was responsible for the family summaries for those volumes of the project dealing with passerines. He was awarded the Union Medal of the British Ornithologists' Union in 1979.

Ken's ornithological interests are exceptionally wide, and include parental anti-predator strategies, studies on plovers (Charadriinae) and ducks (Anatinae), the seabirds of Ascension Island, in the South Atlantic (especially Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*), comfort behaviour, anting, dusting and sunning. His book *The Sunning Behaviour of Birds* was published in 1986. From the beginning, though, his main long-term interest has been in the Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, resulting in many papers on all aspects of the species' life, and earning him his PhD in 1970. *The Great Crested Grebe* (1989, no. 37 in the Shire Natural History series) is a splendid, if brief, synthesis of much of his work on the species.

Thanks once again, Ken. Your wise counsel will be sorely missed, and we wish you well.

... and thanks to Derek, again

In our note last year about Derek Goodwin becoming a new honorary subscriber (*Brit. Birds* 93: 106), we said that he had worked behind the scenes for *BB* on the Behaviour Notes Panel for 23 years. The Panel was initially known as the Notes Panel, which was created in January 1960 (*Brit. Birds* 53: 1-4), and Derek was one of the founder members, so that the length of his stint for *BB* was in fact an amazing 40 years. Apologies to Derek for the oversight, and we repeat and extend our thanks to him.

(Both items above contributed by Robin Prytherch)

Rusty helps the BTO

We do not expect *Rusty Flies South*, by Graham Appleton, and with quite splendid illustrations by Sally Bell, to get many reviews in the birding press. That has not stopped us from reading it (about ten minutes at the most) and thoroughly enjoying it; and all in a very good cause. On 1st September 2001, the British Trust for Ornithology launched 'The Swallow Appeal' with the aim of raising money to address some of the following questions:

- How are changing agricultural practices in the UK and in Africa affecting Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* populations?
- Are Barn Swallows in Britain running out of flies?
- Where are the important feeding areas for Barn Swallows on their migratory journeys?
- How is climate change affecting migratory birds?
- Where are the most important wintering sites in Africa for birds which breed in Britain, and how do we balance the needs of people and birds in that continent?

This is where Rusty comes in. The book, intended for 3-6-year-olds, will be sold in aid of the appeal and is available only from the BTO (£5.00, including p&p). The concept of using the funds from a children's book to discover how we balance the needs of the human population and wildlife in Africa is a bold move indeed. We can only recommend that you buy it, read it and then pass it on to a more junior member of the family. Contact the BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU.

© *British Birds* 94: 510-511, October 2001

Jourdain Society loses charitable status

Back in 1996, it was reported that the police had raided the annual meeting of the Jourdain Society and that, as a result, one of its members was fined for the possession of eggs, including 314 eggs of the Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*. The Jourdain Society is named after the Rev. F. C. R. Jourdain, probably best known to British birdwatchers as joint author, along with Harry Witherby, Norman Ticehurst and Bernard Tucker, of *The Handbook of British Birds*. When the *Handbook* was first published, in 1938-41, there was a much greater acceptance of egg-collecting (almost every schoolboy took part in the pursuit), and there is no doubt that Jourdain's knowledge of the nesting biology of British birds was enormous, perhaps unsurpassed.

Following the above offence, and the prosecution of a number of other members in recent years, the RSPB expressed concern to the Charity Commissioners, since the Jourdain Society was a registered charity, yet many of its members were pursuing an illegal activity. In May 2001, the Jourdain Society agreed to relinquish its charitable status and was removed from the register of charities. We understand that an egg collection held by the Society has been passed to a museum, and that members will be continuing to meet at dinners as representatives of a non-charitable organisation.

Sylvia moves on

Initially as Membership Secretary and then, for the past ten years, as Club Secretary, Sylvia Laing's name has become synonymous with the Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC). Among her many jobs, the one for which she will probably be best remembered by people is that of organiser of the successful SOC Annual Conferences, at which she will be sorely missed. Sylvia travelled daily to Edinburgh from her home in Perth, but that journey has recently become longer and more frustrating, and she has decided to retire from the SOC and to work closer to home. She is, however, not entirely lost to the SOC, since she has agreed to serve on the committee of the Central Scotland (formerly Stirling) Branch. A formal presentation to mark the SOC's appreciation of all Sylvia's good work will be made at this year's Conference, in Newtonmore.

BirdLife Malta (UK)

You do not need to read 'News and comment' to know that Malta has a massive conservation problem. You are also probably well aware that out in Malta a small group of active conservationists is fighting hard, in very difficult circumstances, to improve the situation. It badly needs our support. There are several hundred members of BirdLife Malta living in the UK, and it is intended to form a UK supporters group to help Malta in as many ways as possible. This is obviously a fledgling group at the moment, but if you can assist in any way please contact Anthony Chapman, 8 Havelock Close, Gamlingay, Bedfordshire SG19 3NR.

BOU looks at climate and coasts

In conjunction with the Estuarine and Coastal Studies Association, Northumbrian Water and the Marine Biological Association, the BOU spring conference in 2002 will examine 'Climate Change and Coastal Birds'. The conference aims to provide an overview of the likely impacts of global climate change on coastal birds. Speakers will review topics that have been identified as likely to have an impact, within a series of themes that include the history of climate change and sea-level rise; the socio-economic factors that may mitigate climate change; predicted changes in coastal geomorphology, and in the plant and invertebrate resources of coastal birds; the observed and predicted effects of global climate change on birds; and the possible mitigation of any adverse effects within the present legal framework. The major objective of the conference is to highlight the uncertainties in this arena, and to identify research priorities and, if necessary, the audience that needs to be reached if the health of the coastal ecosystem is to be maintained within the constraints of a global economy. Further information is available from the BOU Office, The Natural History Museum, Tring, Hertfordshire HP23 6AP, or from the BOU website (http://www.bou.org.uk).

MM continued from page 509

Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* and Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*!

All of the leading contenders maintained their positions, however, so that our leaderboard remains unchanged yet again. Peter Lansdown, Andy Mears and Peter Sunesen now have a sequence each of 14 correct answers, while Jon Holt is doggedly hanging on to their tails with 13-in-a-row. Further back still, in fifth place, Lou Cross has a sequence of seven correct answers to his name, no doubt hoping that this competition still has a long way to run.

David Fisher

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Reviews

NIGHTJARS AND THEIR ALLIES

By D.T. Holyoak. Illustrated by Martin Woodcock. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001. 773 pages; 23 colour plates; maps; line-drawings. ISBN 0-19-854987-3. Hardback, £50.00.

This, the latest volume in the excellent 'Bird Families of the World' series, covers the Caprimulgiformes, nocturnal birds that include owlet-nightjars (Aegothelidae), frogmouths (Podargidae and Batrachostomidae), potoos (Nyctibiidae), nightjars, nighthawks and poorwills (Eurostopodidae and Caprimulgidae), and the unique Oilbird *Steatornis caripensis*. The appearance of a third 'nightjar' title in three years, coming so soon after both the Pica Press monograph and volume 5 of the *Handbook of the Birds of the World*, may be questioned by some, but nevertheless I have awaited its arrival eagerly. This sumptuous work is extremely well presented, and it is more of a handbook than a simple monograph or guide.

Part one contains eight general chapters, covering an introduction to the Caprimulgiformes, evolution and classification, speciation and biogeography, habitats, migration and hibernation, food and feeding ecology, nocturnal signalling, breeding biology and moult. Part two contains 118 species accounts and the colour plates. On the whole, Martin Woodcock's plates are excellent, although, on some images, the tawny and buff colours have been printed too red and, in my copy, the figure of the Collared Nightjar *Caprimulgus enarratus* has a blue throat patch! I was especially impressed with some of the frogmouths on plates 3 and 4, the Australian Owlet-nightjar *Aegotheles cristatus* on plate 6 and the Golden *C. eximius* and Long-tailed Nightjars *C. climacurus* on plate 19. In an ideal world, some species would have been illustrated together on the same plate, e.g. Egyptian *C. aegyptius* and Sykes's Nightjars *C. mahrattensis*, and Sickle-winged *Eleothreptus anomalus* with White-winged Nightjar *C. candicans*, while perhaps more racial variation could have been depicted for some species, such as Band-winged Nightjar *C. longirostris*.

The species-account subheadings are taxonomy and nomenclature (including synonyms), other English names, description, moults, bare parts, measurements, weights, geographical variation, range and status, habitat, food and feeding, behaviour, voice, breeding, field characters, conservation, names in other languages, and, finally, references. The inclusion of synonyms is extremely useful, but they are not quoted in full (as explained by the author in the plan of the book) and are not referenced in the bibliography. Some are also incomplete or out of date, and I noticed a number of errors. For example, the first two synonyms of the Pennant-winged Nightjar *Macrodipteryx vexillarius* are given as *Macrodipteryx campylopterus* Heuglin 1864 and *Cosmetornis spekei* Heuglin 1864. The first of these should be *Macrodipteryx condylopterus* Heuglin 1864, which I understand to be a synonym of the Standard-winged Nightjar *M. longipennis*, while the author of the second was Sclater 1861.

A number of important taxonomic changes are proposed by the author, such as the recognition of the genus *Veles* for the Brown Nightjar *C. binotatus* and the moving of the genus *Podager* from the subfamily Chordeilinae (nighthawks) to Caprimulginae (nightjars). The placement of the genera *Eurostopodus* and *Veles* within the Chordeilinae will surely provoke future discussion, as will the merging of *Uropsalis* into *Macropsalis*. At the species level, the Cuban *C. (cubanensis) cubanensis* and Hispaniolan Nightjars *C. (c.) ekmani* have been re-lumped, as have the Pale-headed *Batrachostomus poliolophus* and Bornean Frogmouths *B. mixtus*, despite the wealth of information available suggesting otherwise. The subspecific treatment of certain species struck me as being somewhat out of date, with Rufous Nightjar *C. rufus* being one of the more puzzling accounts. Of the subspecies listed, *noctirigulus* has already been shown to be a synonym of *rufus*, while *maximus* has not appeared in the literature since it was originally described in 1940. Apparently, the latter is in reality an example of a wintering Chuck-will's-widow *C. carolinensis*.

Despite my reservations on certain taxonomic issues, I remain of the opinion that this is an important and extremely commendable work, and it is one which will occupy a prominent position on my bookshelf.

Nigel Cleere

SHORT REVIEW

Essential Birding – Western South Africa

By Callan Cohen & Claire Spottiswoode. (Struik Publishers, Cape Town, 2000. 136 pages; numerous colour photographs and maps. ISBN 1 86872 524 3. Softback, £9.99.) This attractive little book covers the Western and Northern Cape provinces of South Africa. It aims to provide details of the best sites for seeing the region's characteristic bird species, and links these together into practical routes suitable for birders making a short visit to the region.

RR

THE BIRDS OF AFRICA. VOL. VI. PICATHARTES TO OXPECKERS.

Edited by C. Hilary Fry, Stuart Keith & Emil K. Urban. Colour plates by Martin Woodcock; line-drawings by Ian Willis. Academic Press, London, 2000. 724 pages; 36 colour plates; distribution maps, line-drawings. ISBN 0-12-137306-1. Hardback, £115.00.

The sixth (and penultimate) volume of this excellent avifauna covers 324 species, using a similar format to that of the previous five. Drawing upon the extensive field experience of the editors, as well as innumerable other sources, both published and unpublished, volume VI is another impressive and scholarly tome.

The layout is user-friendly, whether or not one is familiar with previous volumes. Families and genera are introduced succinctly, while the species accounts are divided into up to eight sections where appropriate. The text is well written, provides a good summary of available knowledge, and is often enhanced by some fine line-drawings. Despite the enormous increase in knowledge of Africa's birds since the project began, the editors have maintained their high standards and attained their objectives.

Such a huge undertaking inevitably includes the odd bugbear, which detracts only slightly from the whole. In particular, the decision to map all species on the same scale does not work well. Nothing is gained from range maps of a few island endemics, while many other species occupying a restricted range would be better served by the use of a larger scale. In the case of Ashy Starling *Lamprotornis unicolor*, for example, considerable effort has been made to map its distribution accurately, but the small scale used diminishes the impact of the finished product. Since the editors have chosen to ignore Madagascar, its presence on the maps is unnecessary. This is particularly annoying with regard to the few species treated in this volume which occur both there and in mainland Africa; for example, Pied Crow *Corvus alba* is a common bird throughout the island, yet is ignored on the map. In a few cases, such as Ludwig's Double-collared Sunbird *Cinnyris ludovicensis*, the text and map are at odds, leaving the reader wondering which is correct.

The colour plates have been reproduced well, and the design of each one is uncramped. On the whole, however, I found them less pleasing than those in earlier volumes. The thrill of seeing some of the more spectacular sunbirds in the field was, for me, not repeated in the plates.

My final quibble relates to taxonomy, although I do not pretend to understand all of the many changes that have occurred during the lifetime of this project. Reasons are given for some of the editors' choices, not all of which I find compelling. Thus, we have Ethiopian Bush-crow *Zavattariornis stresemanni* in Sturnidae, while four species traditionally included in Pycnonotidae have been placed in this volume, with the rest in volume IV. A more conservative approach would make some of these fascinating species a little easier to find in seven large volumes.

These are, I admit, only minor irritants compared with the truly amazing amount of excellent work presented in this volume. The answers to those manifold questions which arise before, during and after a trip to Africa are to be found among its pages. It has been said many times that these books are invaluable to anyone with an interest in African birds. Volume VI is no exception.

Richard Schofield

Announcement

Ian Wallace painting

Thanks to the generosity of well-known artist and staunch *BB*-supporter Ian Wallace, *BB* is delighted to offer its subscribers the opportunity to purchase this fantastic DIMW original, featuring European Golden Plovers *Pluvialis apricaria* and Northern Lapwings *Vanellus vanellus* in flight. The original, which many readers may have seen on display at the British Birdwatching Fair, at Rutland Water in August, measures 62 by 43 cm framed, and prospective buyers are invited to submit a sealed bid to the Editor of *BB*. Bids must be received by 15th December 2001, and the successful, highest, bid will be announced in the January 2002 issue of *British Birds*.



Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary of unchecked reports covers late August to mid September

Sooty Shearwater *Puffinus griseus* In Ireland, large movements observed in northwest winds: more than 2,000 passed west-coast headlands, such as Kilcummin Head (Co. Mayo), on several dates; during the first two weeks of September, a minimum combined total of 12,000 is estimated to have passed south along the western seaboard of Ireland. **Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis* Bridges-of-Ross (Co. Clare), 23rd August; St Abb's (Borders), 9th September; Bardsey (Gwynedd), 12th September. **Wilson's Storm-petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* In Ireland, a total of four was seen off headlands in Co. Cork and Co. Clare in late August/early September; Bardsey, 12th September. **Leach's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* In Ireland, the peak count was of 2,000 past Kilcummin Head, 8th September.



Gary Bellingham

280. Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel *Pterodroma madeira/feae*, at sea, about 95 km southwest of Scilly, August 2001.



Gary Bellingham

281. Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel *Pterodroma madeira/feae*, at sea, about 95 km southwest of Scilly, August 2001.

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* One flew past Guernsey (Channel Islands), 16th September, with another report of one past Mundesley (Norfolk), also 16th September. **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* Walberswick (Suffolk), from August to 16th September; Dungeness (Kent), 29th-30th August. **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* Ivybridge (Devon), 27th-28th August. **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* Loch of Hillwell and Loch of Brow (Shetland), 8th-20th September. **Black Duck** *Anas rubripes* Helston (Cornwall), 9th-15th September; long-staying individual at Stithian's Reservoir (Cornwall), throughout period. **Blue-winged Teal** *Anas discors* Two, Smerwick Harbour (Co. Cork), 7th-9th September. **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* Juvenile, Brow Marsh (Shetland), 8th-15th September. **Semipalmated Plover** *Charadrius semipalmatus* South Uist (Western Isles), 16th-17th September. **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), 21st August. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* In Ireland, three in early September, two in Co. Kerry and one in Co. Cork; Ogmore estuary (Glamorgan), 3rd-4th September. **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* Leighton Moss (Lancashire), 29th August to 1st September; Pool of Virkie (Shetland), 31st August to 6th September; Cantley Beet Factory (Norfolk), 4th-5th September; Langness Pools (Isle of Man), 13th September (the first for the Isle of Man). **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* Blagdon Lake (Somerset), 12th-20th September; Loch of Strathbeg (Northeast Scotland), 15th-17th September; Long Rock (Cornwall), 16th-18th September; North Uist (Western Isles), 16th-17th September; Foula (Shet-

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Mike Malpass

282. White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*, Leighton Moss, Lancashire, August 2001.

land), 18th-21st September; Dawlish Warren (Devon), 20th September. **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos* In Ireland, there were eight during the period. **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* Grove Ferry (Kent), 30th-31st August. **Stilt Sandpiper** *Micropalama himantopus* Lough Beg (Co. Londonderry), 12th-16th September. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* Two, Tacumshin, early/mid September; Walberswick (Suffolk), 4th-14th September; Islay (Inner Hebrides), 12th September; Freiston (Lincolnshire), 16th September. **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* Devoran (Cornwall), 30th August, Tresillian (Cornwall), 4th-8th September, and Camel estuary, near Wadebridge (Cornwall), 9th-12th September (possibly all the same individual); Tresco (Scilly), 30th August to 17th September; Roadford Reservoir (Devon), 16th-17th September. **Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus* In Ireland, at least 100 seen on seawatches between 1st and 15th September, maximum 27 at Kilcummin, 7th September. **Sabine's Gull** *Larus sabini* In Ireland, at least 170 seen on seawatches between 1st and 15th September, maximum 39 at Ramore Head (Co. Antrim), 14th September. **Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica* St Mary's (Scilly), 3rd September. **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* Gormanstown (Co. Meath), late August. **Pechora Pipit** *Anthus gustavi* Foula, 19th-21st September. **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* North Uist, 31st August; Quendale/Loch of Spiggie (Shetland), 2nd-21st September, with two, perhaps three, there 12th-17th September. **Siberian Rubythroat** *Luscinia calliope* A first-year was reported from a survey boat, west of Shetland, 18th September. **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* Fetlar (Shetland), 14th-15th September. **Thick-billed Warbler** *Acrocephalus aedon* Out Skerries (Shetland), 14th September. **Greenish Warbler** *Phyllo-*



Anthony McGeehan

283. Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos* and Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus*, Lough Beg, Co. Londonderry, September 2001.



Mike McDonnell

284. Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*, Old Hall Marshes, Essex, August 2001.

scopus trochiloides Out Skerries, 31st August; Walsey Hills (Norfolk), 15th September. **Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis* Sandwick (Shetland), 15th-16th September. **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* Lundy (Devon), 28th August. **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* Church Bottom (Wiltshire), 9th September. **Rosy Starling** *Sturnus roseus* New arrivals during the period include: St Mary's, 28th-31st August; Skomer (Dyfed), 29th August; Portland (Dorset), 7th-17th September; St Agnes (Scilly), 17th September. **Arctic Redpoll** *Carduelis hornemanni* Tory Island (Co. Donegal), 18th September. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola* Fair Isle (Shetland), 29th August; Skaw, Unst (Shetland), 29th August to 1st September. **Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala* Birsay (Orkney), 5th September; Out Skerries, 17th-19th September; Fair Isle, at least 19th-21st September.



Ken Shaw



Paul Harvey

285 & 286. Thick-billed Warbler *Acrocephalus aedon*, Out Skerries, Shetland, September 2001. Only the third record for Britain, and all three have been seen in Shetland (the previous two were on Fair Isle, in 1955, and on Whalsay, in 1971). The key identification features in the field are mainly structural: a large *Acrocephalus* warbler, almost as big as Great Reed Warbler *A. arundinaceus*, with an extremely long, markedly rounded tail, and short wings (shown well in plate 285). Even in flight, the short, strong, largely pale bill is obvious, and combines with the 'beady' eye and bland facial pattern (extensive pale lores, no eye-stripe) to give the species a highly distinctive appearance. The upperparts of this first-year were rather dull, pale brown in the field, with little contrast except for a slightly more gingery tone to the rump and forecrown (although the photos enhance the warmer tones). The long, strong legs are distinctly bluish-toned, somewhat like those of an Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*.

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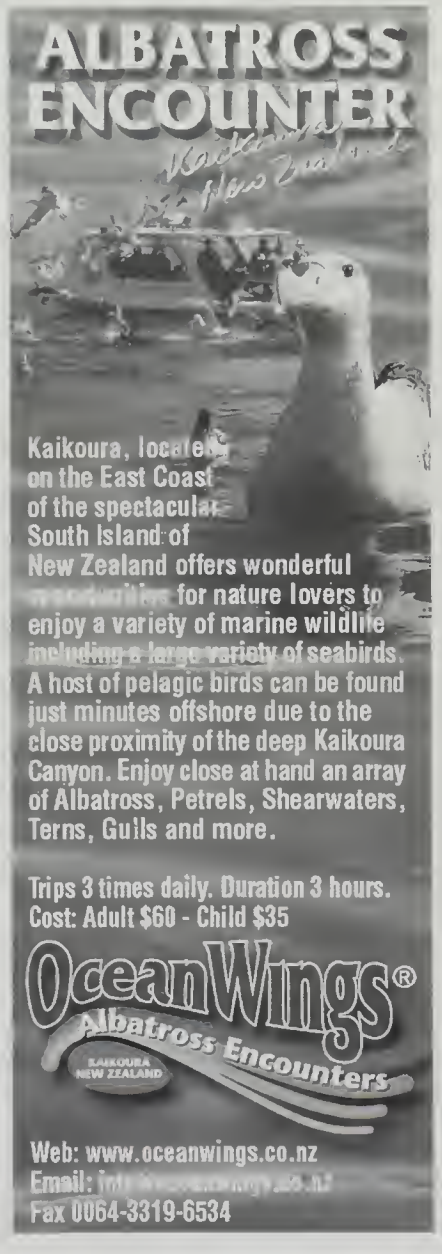
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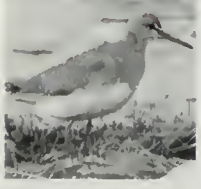


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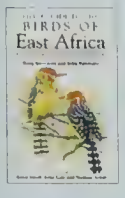
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British Birds

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Non-native birds breeding in the UK

Large white-headed gulls

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Front-cover photograph: Black-headed Gull *Larus ridibundus*. *Tony Clarke*

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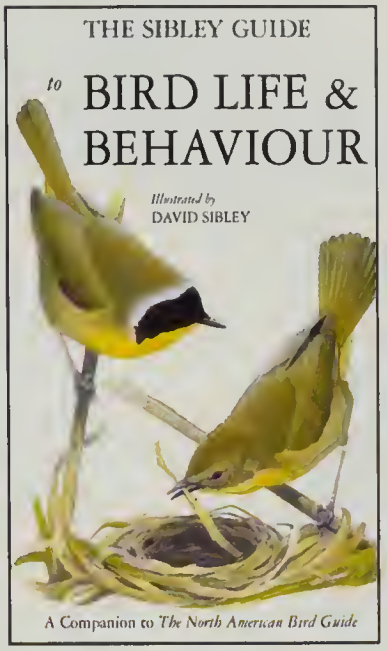
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Non-native birds breeding in the United Kingdom in 1999

Malcolm Ogilvie and the Rare Breeding Birds Panel



Rosemary Watts/Powell

The Rare Breeding Birds Panel has been monitoring the breeding of rarer non-native species in the United Kingdom since 1996, and this is its fourth annual report, covering 1999. It is, however, disappointing to report that, after three years during which the submission of relevant records by County Recorders and other observers has improved, the number of records received this year has fallen. The systematic recording of scarce non-native birds breeding in the UK is important, particularly as it enables the spread of potential problem species to be detected at an early stage. The Panel strongly urges all observers to contribute records to their County Recorders and, through them, to the Panel.

This report lists records of breeding or potential breeding by all non-native species in 1999, plus one for 1998. Pairs or, for some species such as the pheasants (Phasianidae), males in suitable habitat qualify for inclu-

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sion. The letter eodes after the species' names denote the categories used by the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee (BOURC 1998). The absence of a letter indieates that the speeies is not eurrently listed.

A Species which have been reeorded in an apparently natural state at least onee since 1st January 1950.

B Speeies whieh were reeorded in an apparently natural state at least onee up to 31st December 1949, but have not been reeorded subsequently.

C Species that, although originally introduced by Man, either deliberately or aeeidentally, have established breeding populations derived from introduced stock, that maintain themselves without neeessary reeourse to further introduction.

E Speeies that have been recorded as introductions, transportees or eseapees from eaptivity, and whose breeding populations (if any) are thought not to be self-sustaining. These are marked E* when they have been reeorded as nesting with their own kind.

The following speeies, shown as Category C in the British List, are dealt with in the Panel's reports on rare breeding birds (Ogilvie *et al.* 2001): Gadwall *Anas strepera*, Red Kite *Milvus milvus* and Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis*.

The Panel does not gather information for the following relatively eommon speeies of whieh introdueed or eseaped populations breed in the wild (eategories in braekets): Mute Swan *Cygnus olor* (AC), Greylag Goose *Anser anser* (AC), Canada Goose *Branta canadensis* (AC), Mandarin Duck *Aix galericulata* (C), Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* (AC), Ruddy Duek *Oxyura jamaicensis* (C), Capereaillie *Tetrao urogallus* (BC), Chukar Partridge *Alectoris chukar* (E*), Red-legged Partridge *A. rufa* (C), Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* (C), Rock Dove (and Feral Pigeon) *Columba livia* (AC), and Little Owl *Athene noctua* (C).

Reeords are set out in the eountry order England, Seotland and Northern Ireland, and, within those, by alphabetieal order of eounty. There were no reeords of searcer non-native speeies breeding in Wales in 1999.

Systematic list

Night Heron *Nycticorax nycticorax* (AE*)

Two localities: two populations of full-winged individuals.

NORFOLK The flock of full-winged birds at Great Witehingham Park was not eounted this year. LOTHIAN No count was received of the flock of full-winged birds at Edinburgh Zoo.

We understand that the policy of Edinburgh Zoo of preventing any more young birds from beeoming full-winged has continued, with the expeetation that the free-flying members of this group will be gradually redueed over the eoming years.

Black Swan *Cygnus atratus* (E*)

Three loealities: two pairs bred.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE One pair was present throughout the year at Deen Lake, but breeding was not recorded. WILTSHIRE One pair bred on the River Avon, at Salisbury. LOTHIAN One pair bred, for the third year running, on the Union Canal at Ratho.

Both breeding records refer to well-established pairs. Reports of singles and pairs were reeeived from several other areas. In Hampshire, one at Timsbury was sitting on a nest with two eggs in February, but deserted within a week; no mate was seen.

Whooper Swan *Cygnus cygnus* (AE*)

Three loealities: 2-3 pairs bred.

BERKSHIRE A pair raised one young in Windsor Great Park. HERTFORDSHIRE A pair with three first-year birds visited Wilstone Reservoir, Tring, between April and June, although it is not known where it bred in 1998. AYRSHIRE A pair raised two young on Loeh Sloehy.

This is the largest number of eseaped pairs breeding in one year. At least four apparently wild pairs bred in Seotland and Northern Ireland in 1999 (Ogilvie *et al.* 2001).

Pink-footed Goose *Anser brachyrhynchus* (AE*)

Small numbers were reeorded from several localities, but no breeding was reported.

Delany (1993) found a total of 88 individuals at 29 sites in 1991, ineluding a breeding pair in Lancashire.

White-fronted Goose *Anser albifrons* (AE*)

One locality: three pairs bred.

ARGYLL Three full-winged pairs of the Greenland race *flavirostris* bred on Islay, near a waterfowl collection; ten eggs hatched, but only five young survived to three weeks old.

This small group stems from a waterfowl collection. Breeding success is typically low.

Bar-headed Goose *Anser indicus* (E*)

Five localities: up to eight pairs bred, plus a mixed pair.

DERBYSHIRE One pair raised five young at Queen's Park, Chesterfield, a regular breeding site. GREATER MANCHESTER One pair probably bred at Pennington Flash, but was not successful. HAMPSHIRE At Stratfield Saye, a female mated to a male Greylag Goose *A. anser* raised five young. SOMERSET One pair bred at Chew Valley Lake. WEST MIDLANDS Up to five pairs bred at one locality, although success was low.

Very few breeding attempts have been reported in Britain, although Delany (1993) reported 85 individuals at 27 localities in 1991, and the real total may be even higher.

Snow Goose *Anser caerulescens* (AE*)

Two localities: two pairs bred.

HAMPSHIRE Two pairs bred at Stratfield Saye and fledged five young. ARGYLL Up to 30 individuals were seen on Coll during the year, but there were no breeding records.

These represent fewer reports than usual, although this species does not seem to breed freely in the wild.

Barnacle Goose *Branta leucopsis* (AE*)

17 localities in ten counties: at least 43 pairs bred, or probably bred, plus two mixed pairs.

BERKSHIRE Two pairs with six young were reported at Eversley Gravel-pits, a regular site. BUCKINGHAMSHIRE A pair bred at Calvert, while the regular flock at Emberton numbered up to 50, but no information on breeding was received. ESSEX Three pairs bred at two sites in the northeast of the county, but their success is unknown. HAMPSHIRE 20 pairs were present at Stratfield Saye, and apparently breeding, but only two pairs were successful, raising three young. Two pairs raised three young at Baffin's Pond, Portsmouth. LANCASHIRE Two birds, both paired to Canada Geese *B. canadensis*, bred at Belmont, near Bolton, but no eggs hatched. The county total, estimated from an atlas survey between 1997 and 1999, is thought to be five pairs. NORFOLK 12 broods were seen at three different localities, with a total of 65 adults present. Two other localities held 24 and five individuals, respectively, during the breeding season. SOMERSET One pair bred at Chew Valley Lake, with up to eight adults present. ARGYLL A pair of escaped birds on Islay failed to breed. AYRSHIRE A pair with a clutch of nine eggs was present on Horse Island, but it is not known whether any young fledged. ROSS & CROMARTY A pair built a nest near Invergordon and laid three eggs, which failed to hatch.

The above is an incomplete picture of the status of this species.

Egyptian Goose *Alopochen aegyptiacus* (CE*)

Minimum of 54 localities in eight counties: at least 85 pairs recorded.

BERKSHIRE Two pairs bred at Odney, Cookham, and raised nine young. Single pairs bred at Billingbear Golf Course and at Binfield, each fledging seven young, and at Dinton Pastures, where five young survived of seven hatched. A pair bred at Whiteknights Park but was not thought to have fledged any young. A pair was present in April and May at Theale Gravel-pits. ESSEX Three pairs bred, but their success is unknown. GREATER MANCHESTER Two broods were seen in January at Etherow Country Park, where an adult was incubating in April. HERTFORDSHIRE One pair hatched two broods at Amwell Gravel-pit, but neither brood survived. NORFOLK Eight pairs laid clutches in the Stanford Battle area, of which six hatched 40 young. Five pairs were reported at Felbrigg Park, four at Sennowe Park and at Cranwich Gravel-pit, three at Holkham Grazing Marsh and at Whitlingham Lane Gravel-pit, and one or two pairs at 27 other localities. There were also 17 adults with one small young at Nunnery Lakes, Thetford. No details were received from Holkham Park Lake, where 15 pairs were present in 1998. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE One pair raised one young at Center Parcs, Clipstone. SUFFOLK Breeding reported from: Ampton (14 adults with six young); Livermere Lake (at least three pairs bred); Sotterley (two

pairs); Lound (pair with two young); and Oulton Broad (pair with small young). SURREY Three pairs were present, and probably breeding, at Townland Pond, Oxted, and there were single pairs at Lammas Lands, Godalming, and at Godstone Bay Pond, Kew Gardens and the QEII Reservoir.

This represents improved coverage compared with last year (Ogilvie *et al.* 2000).

Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* (BE*)

One locality: one pair.

NORFOLK A pair was present throughout the year at the UEA Broad, Norwich, but was not thought to have bred.

A late-summer influx into southern Britain produced reports of family parties in Norfolk and Northamptonshire.

Muscovy Duck *Cairina moschata* (E*)

Seven localities in three counties: one pair probably bred.

GREATER MANCHESTER A territory-holding pair was reported from the Huddersfield Canal, Mossley. SUFFOLK Numbers at Oulton Broad increased through the year, from 12 in January to 29 in September and 31 in December, suggesting that successful breeding took place, though no reports of broods were received. SURREY One pair probably bred at Langshott, Hurley, while other pairs were present at Barnes, Clapham Common, Ewell Wood Lake and Kew Gardens.

A disappointing year, with many fewer records than in either 1997 or 1998. We do urge observers to report this species, which is not just a farmyard duck.

Wood Duck *Aix sponsa* (E*)

Two localities: 1-2 pairs.

BERKSHIRE A pair bred at Maiden Erlegh Lake and is thought to have raised two young, since four individuals were present in September. SURREY One pair may have bred near Dorking Mill Pond.

These two were the only breeding-season reports received.

Red-crested Pochard *Netta rufina* (AE*)

Five localities in three counties: seven pairs bred.

GREATER MANCHESTER A family party of two adults and five young arrived at Doffcocker Lodge, Bolton, on 28th October; a male and three females were still present at the end of the year. A male was present on Elton Reservoir, Bury, from 28th July to 21st September, being joined by a female on 9th-11th September. NORFOLK Six broods, all believed to have been left full-winged, were reported from the waterfowl collection at Pensthorpe. SURREY Reports were received of a full-winged male in Kew Gardens on 8th April, and of a female at Unstead sewage farm.

A reduction compared with last year, and we still have no details concerning the well-established breeding population at Cotswold Water Park, Gloucestershire.

Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula* (A)

One locality: two pairs bred.

LANCASHIRE Two pairs, known to be of captive origin, bred at Mere Sands Wood, but without success.

The birds which have bred at this site since at least 1988 originated from a nearby waterfowl collection.

Silver Pheasant *Lophura nycthemera* (E*)

Two localities: one pair and a single bird.

NORFOLK One was at Alderfen in late February. SUSSEX A pair was seen in West Dean Woods on 31st January.

These were the only records received.

Reeves's Pheasant *Syrmaticus reevesii* (E*)

Two localities: two calling males and a single bird.

NORFOLK One was at Barnham Broom from 30th November to 11th December. SUFFOLK Two adult males at Wantisden on 31st December were calling constantly.

The only records received.

Golden Pheasant *Chrysolophus pictus* (CE*)

29 localities in four counties: minimum of 98 birds recorded.

LANCASHIRE A small population persists in the Lytham area, surviving from releases last made in 1993; some hybridisation with Common Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* has been reported. In addition, a pair was present from January to March at Mere Sands Wood. NORFOLK A total of at least 77 birds was reported from 14 localities, an increase for the second year running, although there are thought to be up to 100 in the county.

SUFFOLK Records were received from 11 localities, including six calling males: at The King's Forest (four), Elveden and Thetford Forest (one each). SUSSEX A minimum of two males and a female was seen at Linchball and West Dean Woods; another pair was reported from West Dean, but no indications of breeding.

No reports were received from the known localities on Furzey and Brownsea Islands, Dorset, and Tresco, Isles of Scilly.

Lady Amherst's Pheasant *Chrysolophus amherstiae* (CE*)

One county: five pairs.
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Five pairs were reported, but no complete survey has ever been carried out.

In 1998, a total of 85 territories was identified in Bedfordshire (Cannings 1999), but the survey has not been repeated.

Common Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* (E*)

Three localities in one county: three pairs bred.
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE Two females hatched broods of four and one young, respectively, at Pipewell Wood, but only one young survived, from the brood of four. A pair with two well-grown young was at Kirby Hall on 13th June, with a second pair nearby. Individuals were also reported from a third location.

This is a new species for these reports, although we have subsequently discovered that a pair fledged three young at Pipewell Wood in 1998.

Alexandrine Parakeet *Psittacula eupatria* (E*)

One locality: one pair bred.
MERSEYSIDE One pair bred at Fazackerley (success unknown), where a single pair bred in 1997 and two pairs bred in 1998.

This remains the only breeding site in Britain for this species.

Rose-ringed Parakeet *Psittacula krameri* (CE*)

Four counties.
BERKSHIRE Three pairs were reported from Cookham and two pairs from both Bray and Maidenhead Court. Single pairs were seen at Horton Gravel-pit and in Windsor Great Park.
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE Fewer were reported during the breeding season than in 1998, with about 12 birds in five or six areas, and a total of 50-60 wintering individuals. MIDDLESEX One breeding pair was reported.
SURREY Up to 15 breeding or territory-holding pairs were reported, but it is known that this figure does not represent the number breeding in the county. The roost at Esher peaked at around 3,000 in November.

A study of the population biology of this species in southeast England commenced in 2000, which should lead to a much better knowledge of its breeding status and distribution.

Monk Parakeet *Myiopsitta monachus* (E*)

Three localities or areas: breeding occurred at two.
DEVON A single was at Stoke Hill, Exeter, in August. HERTFORDSHIRE There is a small breeding population in Borehamwood, with up to 17 birds seen in February. SURREY A pair bred at Lonsdale Reservoir, but the outcome is unknown; small numbers are regular in this area, and around Barn Elms and Richmond Park.

The species is probably commoner around London than the above indicates. It is likely that the study of Rose-ringed Parakeets (see above) will reveal more information about this species, too.

Eagle Owl *Bubo bubo* (E*)

Two localities: one pair bred.
ENGLAND One pair bred at a location in northern England and fledged two young.
WARWICKSHIRE An unmated male, apparently on territory, was calling in wooded rural parkland between February and December.

The pair in the north of England bred for the fourth year running.

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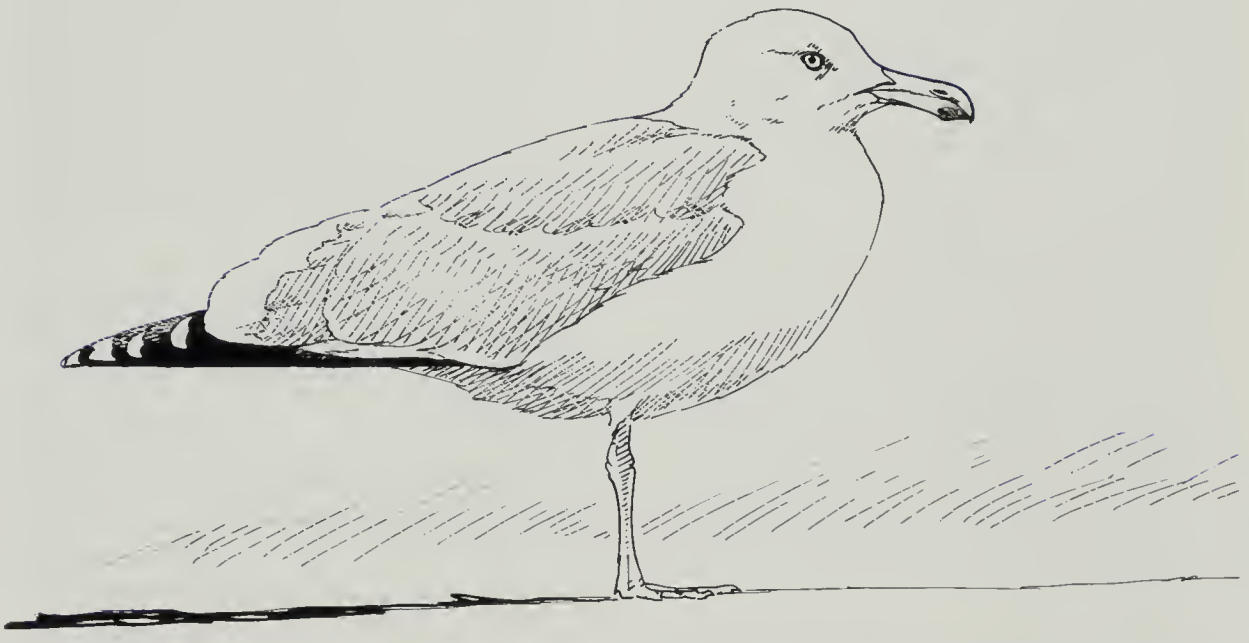
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Genetic relationships among the different races of Herring Gull, Yellow-legged Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull

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Dave Nurney

ABSTRACT Genetic analyses of the relationships among different forms of Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*, Herring Gull *L. argentatus* and Yellow-legged Gull *L. cachinnans* are beset with difficulties, associated with apparently low levels of genetic divergence, inbreeding, and the highly unstable nature of gull populations. This short review summarises and discusses a new attempt to tackle this problem (de Knijff *et al.* 2001). While the results do not solve the 'gull problem', they have provided much new evidence on the extent of genetic variation among different individuals of the same taxon, which will be crucial to any future consideration of gull taxonomy.

The complex of 'large white-headed gulls', which in Europe comprises the various forms of Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus*, Herring Gull *L. argentatus* and Yellow-legged Gull *L. cachinnans*, has long been a source of lively taxonomic debate. There are at least 14 recognised taxa that potentially occur in the Western Palearctic, and probably at least as many interpretations of their specific status (e.g. Mayr 1963; Barth 1975; Cramp & Simmons 1983; Haffer 1982). A conservative viewpoint, such as that currently held by the British Ornithologists' Union, recognises only two species, Herring Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull, each with a number of subspecies. In the climate of phylogenetic splitting which has accompanied the resurgence of interest in taxonomic matters among birdwatchers in Europe, the opposite (extreme) viewpoint has been to assume that all the recognisable forms are, in fact, separate species, and to treat them as such. A straw-poll among European birders would, however, probably reveal a consensus view that, in the Western Palearctic, four or five species exist:

(1) Herring Gull *L. argentatus*, including the subspecies *argentatus*, *argenteus* and also, usually, *smithsonianus* ('American Herring Gull').

(2) Lesser Black-backed Gull *L. fuscus*, including the subspecies *graellsii*, *intermedius* and *fuscus* (the latter sometimes being treated separately as 'Baltic Gull'). This group may also include the Siberian gulls *L. (f.) heuglini* and *L. (f.) taimyrensis*, since many adult *heuglini* are essentially indistinguishable from *graellsii* in the field.

(3) 'Steppe Gull' or 'Caspian Gull' *L. cachinnans*, comprising the forms *cachinnans* (including the form '*ponticus*') and *barabensis*, although this category is often considered to include those taxa in (4) below.

(4) 'Yellow-legged Gull' *L. (c.) michahellis*, including the forms *michahellis*, *armenicus* and *atlantis*.

In addition, some authors regard 'Siberian Gull', comprising the forms *heuglini* and *taimyrensis*, as potentially deserving of specific status, as *L. heuglini* (e.g. Filchagov *et al.* 1992; Buzun in press).

It is, however, possible to argue about the true status of every taxon, and the relationships within this gull assemblage are best regarded as 'unproven'. Most authors agree that, during the Pleistocene glaciations, this group of large gulls must have been confined to three or four southern refugia, and that the northern forms have evolved as the birds moved out from these refugia during interglacial periods (Mayr 1963). Several research groups have undertaken genetic or biochemical studies on these gulls (Johnson 1985; Snell 1991; Wink *et al.* 1994; Heidrich *et al.* 1996; Liebers & Helbig 1999), with varying, but often equivocal, results which probably reflect either a high degree of gene flow among the various taxa or a very recent common ancestry, or both. Liebers & Helbig, using analyses of mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA), have produced the most promising and authoritative genetic results; since mtDNA is carried only through the female line (none of the spermatozoon's mitochondria enters the egg at fertilisation), however, there are potential problems with its use in situations where males and females behave differently or may have different levels of fertility in hybrid crosses.

A recent paper in *Journal of Molecular Evolution*, by de Knijff *et al.* (2001), re-examines the genetic relationship among 11 of these gull taxa (Common Gull *L. canus* was chosen as a more distantly related outgroup), using a modification of genetic fingerprinting known as Amplified Fragment Length Polymorphisms (AFLP). This method, which is explained more fully below (see Appendix on page 528), has the potential to circumvent some of the problems associated with studies by other workers. First, it looks at nuclear genes, hence reflecting the evolution of both sexes. Secondly, some of the sequences analysed will be evolving rapidly, thus allowing phylogenetic information to be obtained from taxa that have only recently diverged.

A criticism of some genetic studies, as described in Collinson (2001), is that the intra-taxon genetic variation is not examined properly, or is ignored altogether. It is not possible to assess the significance of genetic variation among individuals of different subspecies unless the average amount of varia-

tion among individuals in the *same* subspecies is known. To address this, de Knijff *et al.* took DNA from blood samples of 109 individual gulls from colonies in 14 Western Palearctic locations (fig. 1), subjected them to AFLP fingerprinting, and then analysed the amount of genetic variation not only between different taxa, but also within these taxa at the same site, and between geographically separated populations of the same taxa. As expected, different individuals had different genetic fingerprints, and these varied both within and between taxa, and between geographical locations. What was perhaps less expected was the degree of genetic variation *within* certain taxa, as opposed to the level of differentiation *between* taxa. The authors used statistics (the analysis of molecular variance, AMOVA, which is a modification of the analysis of variance test, ANOVA) to split the variation among different groups into quantified components. There are several different models by which the European large white-headed gulls may be grouped, and the authors tested the seven most sensible, described below.

Model 1 Treating every gull taxon from every sampling location (each point in fig. 1) independently: for example, not only are *cachinnans*, *michahellis*, *graellsii* etc. all analysed independently, but *graellsii* from different study sites (e.g. in England, Faroes and Iceland) are also treated independently in the analysis.

Model 2 Treating each taxon independently, but ignoring sampling location. Using the above example, *cachinnans*, *michahellis*, *graellsii* etc. would still be treated separately, but, in contrast to Model 1, the *graellsii* from all locations would be combined into one group and analysed together.

Other models put all the gull taxa into groups that may represent putative species, and then look at genetic variation within and among the groups ('species') and among different populations ('subspecies') within the groups, as well as among different individuals of the same subspecies:

Model 3 Four groups of gulls representing four possible species. Common Gull is allocated a group of its own; *argentatus* and *argenteus* are lumped together; the 'yellow-legged gulls', i.e. *cachinnans*, *michahellis* and *atlantis*, are similarly grouped; while the 'black-backed gulls', including *heuglini* and *taimyrensis*, are placed in the fourth group.

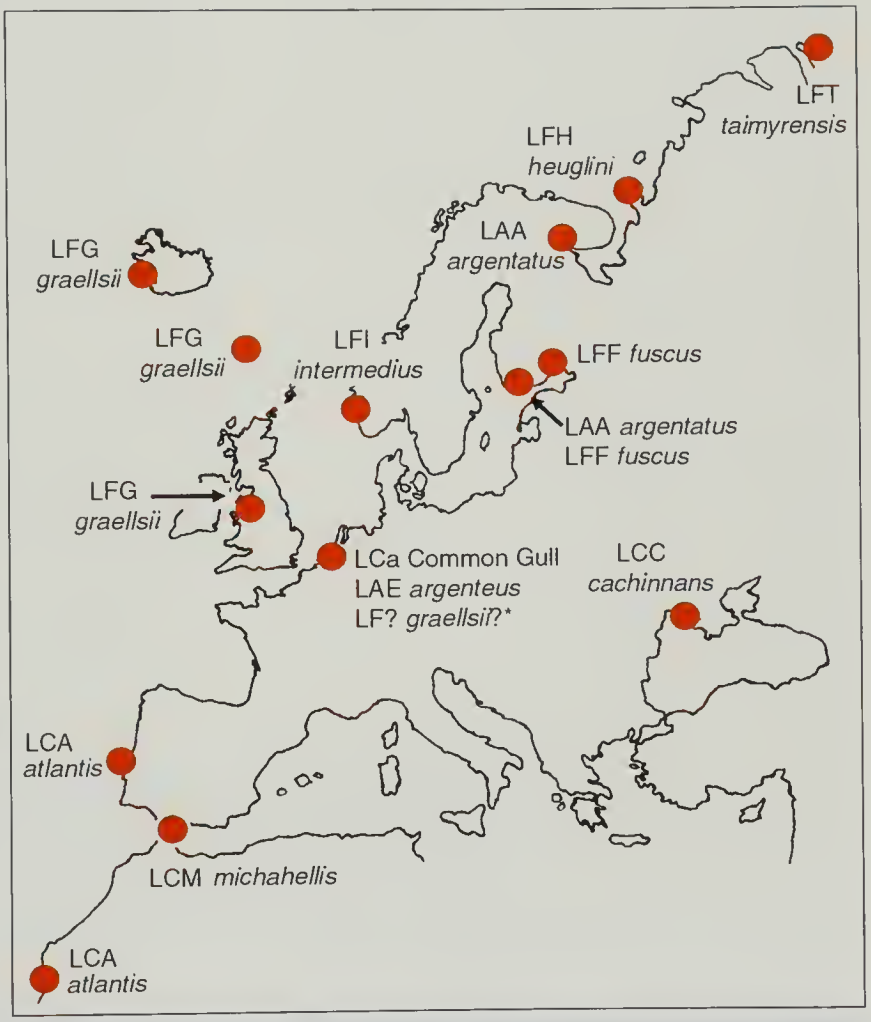


Fig. 1. Sampling locations of gulls *Larus* used in the study by de Knijff *et al.* (2001). The three-letter codes are shorthand for the full scientific names, so that 'LFG' represents *Larus fuscus graellsii*, although the subspecific names are repeated in full for clarity. Lesser Black-backed Gulls from the Dutch site (* in figure) are phenotypically similar to *graellsii*, but were designated 'LF?' to indicate that *intermedius* influence could not be eliminated, and were analysed separately.

Model 4 Four groups. Common Gull and *cachinnans* are placed in groups on their own; *michahellis* and *atlantis* are grouped with *argentatus* and *argenteus*; and, as in Model 3, all the 'black-backed gulls' are considered together.

Model 5 Five groups. As Model 3, but *cachinnans* is split from the other 'yellow-legged gulls', and placed in a category of its own.

Model 6 Seven groups. As Model 5, but with the 'black-backed' group split into three putative species: *graellsii* was lumped with the uncertain taxon (presumed *graellsii*) from The Netherlands; *fuscus* and *intermedius* were grouped together; and the 'Siberian' gulls, *heuglini* and *taimyrensis*, were treated as a separate group.

Model 7 Eight groups. As Model 6, but with *intermedius* and *fuscus* placed in different groups, on their own.

All the models produced very similar results. For each model, 76-80% of the genetic variance observed was due to differences *within* the populations studied (i.e. among individuals of the *same* taxon), with only the remaining 20-24% assignable to differences *among* groups (or among different subspecies within groups).

Therefore, although different forms of these gulls from different geographical locations are often easily distinguishable phenotypically, they do not form a genetically well-defined hierarchy of species, subspecies and individual variation. The results of the genetic analyses did not distinguish whether there are just two species (Herring Gull and Lesser Black-backed Gull) or as many as seven.

When the authors drew a phylogenetic tree for all the different individuals sampled, this failed to produce any sensible groupings of similar-looking gulls from the same location into closely related clusters. Instead, the tree suggested a rather random divergence of all the gulls from a recent, single ancestor. The AMOVA analysis, however, allows the genetic differences among gull taxa to be isolated from the total genetic variation within populations, and enables phylogenetic trees to be drawn up on the basis of this inter-taxa variance. Such a tree, based on this analysis, is presented in fig. 2, and this looks more like what one might expect. The data suggest that, with Common Gulls as the outgroup, 'Caspian Gulls', *L. c. cachinnans*, are the sister group to all the other forms considered, with Herring Gulls of the subspecies *argenteus* and *argentatus* most closely related to western Yellow-legged Gulls *michahellis* and *atlantis*. The 'black-backs' form a clade of their own, with the Siberian

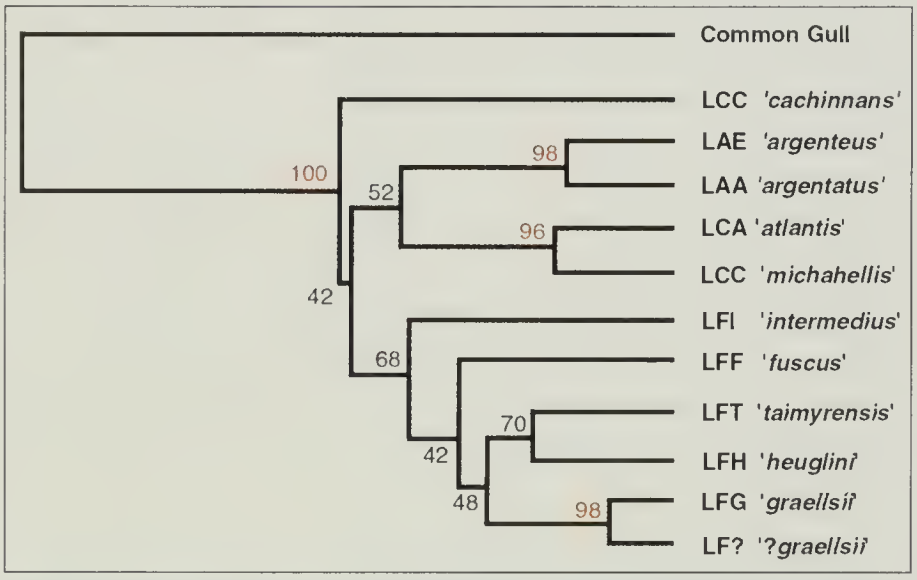


Fig. 2. Representation of the possible evolutionary history of the Western Palearctic large white-headed gulls *Larus* based on analysis of the AMOVA-derived genetic distance between gull populations. A measure of the degree of confidence (0-100%) that can be placed on the position of each bifurcation in the tree is given by the numbers, which represent the percentage of bootstrap replications that support the split. (Following de Knijff *et al.* 2001)
Although the tree looks convincing, most of the relationships outlined are not strongly supported. There is, however, strong support for the following groupings, marked in red:
(1) *argenteus* and *argentatus*, the West European and Scandinavian Herring Gulls, are sister taxa.
(2) *atlantis* and *michahellis*, the Atlantic and Mediterranean Yellow-legged Gulls, are similarly related.
(3) The Lesser Black-backed Gulls *L. fuscus* from The Netherlands are indeed *graellsii*, being closely related to *graellsii* from other locations.

taxa *taimyrensis* and *heuglini* being closely related. Statistically, this tree is, however, not very robust (the only branch points that are more than 90% significant are the clustering of *argenteus* with *argentatus* and of *atlantis* with *michahellis*, and the splitting of Common Gulls from the rest of the gull assemblage). It would appear, therefore, that these taxa are very closely related to each other.

The AFLP analysis also revealed that all these gull taxa were much more inbred than would be expected by chance. This is perhaps not surprising, for all taxa show great breeding-site fidelity, which will tend to pair up individuals with genetic relatives. It was also found that there are high levels of gene flow among taxa. This apparently contradictory finding may simply be a result of the recent massive expansion of gull populations, associated with human activity. Studies by other workers (Johnson 1985; Snell 1991) have also suggested that different gull taxa are very closely related, with a high level of inbreeding. The phylogenetic history of the gulls would appear to be extremely dynamic, with rapid radiation from a common ancestor, and inbreeding caused by breeding-site fidelity.

Conclusions and comment

The research by de Knijff *et al.* used a method of genetic analysis which avoids many of the pitfalls associated with the techniques employed by other researchers. Nevertheless, although their study has provided a great deal of useful new information, it has not solved the problem of understanding the relationships among all these gulls. Most of the observable genetic difference between any two individual gulls, for example a *cachinnans* and a *graellsii*, is due to the genetic variation within these (sub)species, rather than the genetic variation between the two taxa.

It is clear that the easily visible phenotypic differences among 'classic' individuals of, for example, *fuscus* Lesser Black-backed Gulls, *michahellis* or *cachinnans* 'Yellow-legged' Gulls and *argenteus* or *argentatus* Herring Gulls do not, according to this study, correspond with an equally clear-cut hierarchy of genetic differences. How is this possible? Two explanations are proposed. One option is that, although, following splitting of ancestral gull species during the glaciations, the process of speciation among the Western Palearctic large gulls has begun, many of the taxa are still in the 'grey zone' (Collinson 2001), whereby it is not possible to show that all the criteria for full species status have been achieved. Specific changes in display, behaviour and breeding biology have created near-complete reproductive isolation of some of the taxa, and on a relatively short timescale (Brown 1967; Yésou 1991); but the lineages have not been split for sufficiently long for nuclear-DNA sequences to have diverged clearly.

The second option is to assume that all these gulls belong to one species which radiated out of the Caspian area after the Ice Ages as a chain of small founder populations, evolving and changing as they did so. Subsequent hybridisation among the expanding descendants of these founder populations has created the enormously variable range of gulls which we see in Eurasia today. This second model is analogous to the repopulation of Europe by Man after the Ice Ages.

Neither explanation necessarily excludes the other completely, and neither can be discounted on the basis of these genetic results. De Knijff *et al.* favour a combination of the two.

In 1993, *British Birds* adopted the policy of giving species status to some of the forms of Herring Gull (*Brit. Birds* 86: 1-2), recognising 'Yellow-legged Gull' as a full species, *Larus cachinnans*, with western and eastern subspecies *L. c. michahellis* and *L. c. cachinnans*. Although this represented a consensus view among European birdwatchers at the time, such a split was also criticised as being premature, with much of the biology and identification criteria of these birds remaining insufficiently documented (*Brit. Birds* 86: 316-319). In fact, de Knijff *et al.* do not recommend wholesale changes to the taxonomic arrangement of 'herring gulls', since their analyses revealed no clear emerging pattern to distinguish whether there are two, three or seven species in this complex. Nevertheless, their work, when taken together with previous analyses of the evolutionary history of these gulls (Mayr 1963; Barth 1975), does suggest that 'Caspian Gulls' *L. c. cachinnans* are a basal group of

the other European large white-headed gulls, and that 'Yellow-legged Gull' as recognised by *British Birds* is consequently a paraphyletic grouping, since some of the populations that are descended from the common ancestor of *cachinnans* and *michahellis* have been excluded from the species.

While we must be aware of the limitations of the data discussed above, and avoid over-interpretation, it does seem that the current *British Birds* treatment of 'Yellow-legged Gull' (i.e. the lumping of the taxa *michahellis* and *cachinnans*) is untenable.

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Appendix

Amplified Fragment Length Polymorphism (AFLP)

The AFLP technique produces a 'genetic fingerprint' from individuals of species or subspecies, and has the advantage that it does not require any of the specific DNA sequence of the taxa to be known already. Nuclear DNA is cut into fragments, using restriction enzymes; oligonucleotide adaptors of known sequence are then ligated to the cut ends of the DNA. PCR (polymerase chain reaction) amplification is performed using primers the 5' sequence of which is complementary to the adaptors, but the 3' sequence of which overruns into the nuclear DNA. PCR products are, therefore, produced only from that minority of nuclear restriction fragments having ends that are complementary to the 3' ends of the PCR primers. Up to 150 nuclear sequences of different sizes, produced by the PCR reaction, can then be separated by electrophoresis, visualised as bands in a gel: the genetic fingerprint of the individual. Presence or absence of bands of all sizes can be scored to provide a measure of the difference in genetic sequence among individuals of the same or of different taxa.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Although Martin Collinson's paper suggests that the present treatment of the Western Palearctic large white-headed gulls by *British Birds* may be inappropriate, we intend to refrain from making a further change to our accepted list of species until the BOURC reaches a decision about the treatment of these forms. We look forward to any such decision with great interest.

Mixed colonies of large white-headed gulls in southern Poland

Marcin Faber, Jacek Betleja, Robert Gwiazda and Pawel Malczyk

In the early part of 1999, we discovered a small colony of large white-headed gulls *Larus* at a gravel-pit near Jankowice, on the banks of the Vistula river in southern Poland, about 50 km from Krakow. On 28th February, we observed six pairs of gulls there which showed characteristics of the nominate race of Yellow-legged Gull *L. cachinnans cachinnans* ('Caspian Gull', hereafter referred to simply as *cachinnans*). When engaged in the characteristic long-call display, they adopted the 'albatross posture', with head raised vertically, and wings raised above and behind the body with the hand unbent, which is characteristic of *cachinnans* (Mierauskas *et al.* 1991; Jonsson 1998), while the calls were also lower-pitched than those of 'Northern' Herring Gulls *L. argentatus argentatus* (hereafter referred to simply as *argentatus*). During a subsequent visit to the colony, on 17th April, when the gulls were nesting, we also observed two individuals of the Mediterranean race of Yellow-legged Gull *L. c. michahellis* (hereafter referred to simply as *michahellis*).

At the Jankowice colony, there were 11 occupied nests in May 1999, while some 40 nests were found in both 2000 and 2001. We visited colonies of large gulls elsewhere in southern Poland, including one of about 120 nests (at Tarnow) and two each of about ten nests (at Goczalkowice reservoir and Czorsztyn reservoir), and we estimate the current breeding population of *cachinnans* in southern Poland to be approximately 180 pairs.

During three years of study at Jankowice, Tarnow and Goczalkowice reservoir, we managed to capture 85 gulls, which we ringed, measured and photographed (see plates 287-297), and of which we compiled detailed descriptions. Most (77.6%) showed characters of adult or subadult *cachinnans* (plates 287-289), while five individuals (5.9%) were identified as *michahellis* (plates 290 & 291). We did not find typical *argentatus* in these breeding colonies, but 16.5% of the gulls which we examined in the hand showed features consistent with their being hybrids. Most of those which we believe to have been hybrids exhibited characters that were intermediate between those of *argentatus* and those of *cachinnans* (plates 294 & 295). In addition, two individuals showed features intermediate between *cachinnans* and *michahellis* (plates 292, 293, 296 & 297).

Details of captured gulls

In order to assign individuals to a particular taxon, we used the following key texts: Bakker *et al.* (2000), Garner & Quinn (1997), Garner *et al.* (1997), Jonsson (1996, 1998), Klein & Gruber (1997) and Neubauer & Millington (2000). We also discussed the putative hybrid individuals with a number of gull experts, in particular Detlef Gruber, Ronald Klein, Gregory Neubauer and Rik Winters.

L. c. cachinnans The upperwing pattern was typical of the western, or Black Sea, type, often referred to as *L. c. ponticus*. Biometrics also supported our identification of these birds as *cachinnans*.

Key identification features were as follows. Long, obvious, whitish 'tongue' projecting towards the tip of the inner web of the outermost primaries, forming a clear contrast with the darker mantle. Typically, a wide, complete black band across both webs of P5 (primaries numbered descendently, with the outermost being P10),



Jacek Betleja

287. Subadult Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans* of nominate subspecies *cachinnans*, Jankowice, southern Poland, 2nd May 1999. Note the very long and comparatively slender bill, and flat forehead. Orbital ring orange-red, while the iris appears dark at distance (but is yellowish with dense brown spotting at close range).



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288. Wing of adult Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans* of nominate subspecies *cachinnans*, Jankowice, southern Poland, 2nd May 1999. This individual has a typical '*ponticus*' (Black Sea-type) wing pattern, with a white tip to P10 and extensive white 'tongues' extending into the black wingtip.



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289. Wing of subadult Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans* of nominate subspecies *cachinnans*, Jankowice, southern Poland, 1st May 1999. Like the individual in plate 288, this has a typical '*ponticus*' wing pattern. On the primary coverts, traces of brown confirm that this bird is not yet fully mature.

sometimes with a black spot on P4, too (plate 288). Only a narrow black band on P10, this lacking altogether in many cases. Mantle paler than *michahellis*, and a similar shade of grey to *argentatus*. Forehead comparatively long and flat, bill slender. Legs pale yellow or greyish-pink. Orbital ring orange-red. Iris generally brown or light brown, but often yellowish with dense, darker brown spotting, causing it to appear dark at a distance (plate 287).

L. c. michahellis Mantle colour dark grey, darker than any other form discussed here, with deep yellow legs and clean, pale yellow iris (plate 290). Primaries with extensive black, covering almost one-third of the hand. Pale tongues on the outer primaries, not showing marked contrast with mantle (plate 291).

'*argentatus* × *cachinnans* hybrids' 12 individuals showed features intermediate between these two forms, although we cannot be absolutely certain that they are true hybrids, rather than simply less typical *cachinnans*. These birds typically showed the following features:

In general, biometrics not typical of *argentatus* or *cachinnans* (*BWP*; Mierauskas *et al.* 1991; see Appendix 1 on page 534). Rounded head shape, with high forehead, favouring *argentatus*, as did the iris colour (very pale, yellow, finely spotted brown; appeared pale at a distance). Leg colour intermediate between the two, greyer than typical flesh-pink of *argentatus*. Upperwing primaries showed a typical pattern for western *cachinnans*, with very obvious whitish tongues on the outermost primaries,

showing a marked contrast with the darker mantle. Mantle colour of similar shade of grey to *cachinnans*.

One individual is shown in plates 294 & 295. The biometrics of this individual are typical for *argentatus* (*BWP*; Mierauskas *et al.* 1991), with the exception of the bill, which was comparatively long and slender. Wings relatively short, and tarsi relatively short and wide, similar to *argentatus*. In addition, this individual, when examined on 1st May 1999, differed from all the *cachinnans* handled on that date in that it was the only one which had not yet begun primary moult. All the gulls diagnosed as pure *cachinnans* had commenced moult, having lost two or three innermost primaries.

'*michahellis* × *cachinnans* hybrids' Two adult males showed features intermediate between these two forms. They were characterised by a comparatively dark mantle, darker than that of a typical *cachinnans*, with a broad black band on P5. One of them had dark grey longitudinal spots on P4 and P3, while the primaries had very small apical spots. A large extent of black on the primaries covered approximately one-third of the hand (plates 292 & 297). Both had a relatively steep forehead, and the bill was long and, particularly, deep. Leg colour of one individual was pale yellow, and that of the other pale pink. The irides were yellow with some brown spotting (plates 293 & 296). These two individuals had biometrics closer to *cachinnans* than to *michahellis*, the only marked difference (from *cachinnans*) being in bill depth (see Appendix 2 on page 534).



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290. Adult 'Mediterranean' Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans michahellis*, Jankowice, southern Poland, 1st May 1999. Note the dark grey mantle, deep yellow legs and plain, pale yellow iris.



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291. Wing of adult 'Mediterranean' Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans michahellis*, Jankowice, southern Poland, 1st May 1999. This form shows a great deal of black on the primaries, extending across about one-third of the hand. The grey 'tongues' on the outer primaries do not differ sharply in colour from the mantle.



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292. Wing of adult gull thought to be hybrid between nominate and Mediterranean forms of Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus cachinnans cachinnans* and *L. c. michahellis*, Jankowice, southern Poland, 1st May 1999. The grey 'tongues' do not contrast with the dark mantle; there is a broad black band on P5 and dark grey longitudinal spots on P4 and P3, while there are just very small apical spots on the primaries. See text for further discussion.

Discussion

In recent years, large white-headed gulls have shown an increase in numbers and an expansion of range in many parts of Europe (Snow & Perrins 1998). In Poland, *argentatus* began to nest in the early 1970s, since when a steady rise in numbers and an extension of the area occupied have been observed (Tomiałojć 1990). Currently, this subspecies occurs mainly in northern Poland (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997).

Large gulls with yellow legs were first recorded breeding in southern Poland in the 1980s, in the central part of the Vistula river basin (Dubois *et al.* 1990), where small numbers still breed. The subspecific identity of these gulls has caused a great deal of debate (Chylarecki & Sikora 1991; Dubois *et al.* 1990; Eigenhuis 1990; Mierauskas & Greimas 1992; P. Chylarecki *in litt.*), although Jonsson (1998) claimed that all three forms (*argentatus*, *cachinnans* and *michahellis*) are present at this site. Away from this area, breeding by yellow-legged gulls was recorded in 1998 in Malopolska, near Przemysl (Walasz & Mielczarek 1992), and on the Mietkowski reservoir, in Silesia, where two pairs of *michahellis* nested within a colony of *cachinnans* in 2001 (T. Stawarczyk *in litt.*). Until recently, this was the only confirmed Polish record of yellow-legged gulls which had been confidently identified to subspecies. Now, new colonies of nesting large gulls are discovered in southern Poland every year. At Jankowice, we have confirmed that individuals of the forms *michahellis* and *cachinnans* are nesting side by side. We cannot be absolutely certain that the two forms are mixing, although the appearance of gulls with intermediate features would suggest that this is the case.

In conclusion, although the identification of adult *michahellis* is, in our opinion, relatively straightforward, our experience



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293. Head of putative hybrid between nominate and Mediterranean forms of Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus cachinnans cachinnans* and *L. c. michahellis*, Jankowice, southern Poland, 1st May 1999. Note the long bill (more similar to *cachinnans*), but which is also deep, and the steep forehead (both more similar to *michahellis*). The iris is yellow but with plenty of brown spots, intermediate between the two forms.



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294. Adult gull thought to be hybrid between nominate Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans cachinnans* and 'Northern' Herring Gull *L. argentatus argentatus*, Jankowice, southern Poland, 1st May 1999. The head shape is rounded, with a high forehead, while the tarsus is short and quite thick (favouring *argentatus*). The bill is long and comparatively slender, favouring *cachinnans*. The legs are pale, greyish-flesh, while the iris colour is pale, yellow, but spotted brown, both features which are intermediate between typical examples of the two forms.

suggests that the positive identification of adult *cachinnans* in this part of Europe can be extremely tricky. The occurrence of putative hybrids, or of individuals which are intermediate in appearance between *cachinnans* and *argentatus*, means that observers should be cautious in assigning individuals to this taxon in the field, at least without extremely detailed observations or an analysis of photographs.



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295. Wing of putative hybrid between nominate Yellow-legged Gull *Larus cachinnans cachinnans* and 'Northern' Herring Gull *L. argentatus argentatus*, Jankowice, southern Poland, 1st May 1999. The mantle is very pale grey, with a typical '*ponticus*' wing pattern showing a very long white 'tongue' on P10. All biometric features are, however, typical of *argentatus*.



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296. Head of adult putative hybrid between nominate and Mediterranean forms of Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus cachinnans cachinnans* and *L. c. michahellis*, Jankowice, southern Poland, April 2000.



Jacek Betleja

297. Wing of adult putative hybrid between nominate and Mediterranean forms of Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus cachinnans cachinnans* and *L. c. michahellis*, Jankowice, southern Poland, April 2000.

Acknowledgments

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Appendix 1. Biometrics of *Larus cachinnans cachinnans* from the Black Sea and of *L. argentatus argentatus* from the Baltic Sea (Mierauskas *et al.* 1991), together with biometrics of 12 Polish gulls showing intermediate characters between those two taxa. All measurements are in mm.

	Sex	*cachinnans* Black Sea			*argentatus* Baltic sea			Twelve Polish gulls		
		Mean	S.D.	No.	Mean	S.D.	No.	Mean	S.D.	No.
Head+bill length	M	133.6	0.5	35	131.0	1.0	16	132.2	0.5	5
	F	122.9	0.3	71	120.5	0.6	26	123.0	2.7	7
Bill length	M	62.1	0.4	34	57.6	0.7	16	59.8	1.7	5
	F	56.3	0.3	71	51.9	0.4	26	56.2	1.6	7
Bill depth (at gonys)	M	19.5	0.2	35	19.6	0.2	16	20.2	0.5	5
	F	17.2	0.1	71	17.6	0.1	26	17.2	0.6	7
Bill length/bill depth at gonys	M	3.18			2.94			2.96	0.1	5
	F	3.27			2.95			3.26	0.1	7
Tarsus	M	72.3	0.4	35	68.2	1.0	16	72.6	2.1	5
	F	66.9	0.3	71	64.9	0.7	26	65.8	2.2	7
Wing	M	464.6	1.6	35	452.0	2.4	16	460.6	11.3	5
	F	440.8	1.0	71	434.0	1.9	26	431.7	12.5	7

Appendix 2. Biometrics of *Larus cachinnans michahellis* from the Mediterranean and of *L. c. cachinnans* from the Black Sea (G. Neubauer & M. Zagalska, unpublished data), together with biometrics of two Polish gulls showing intermediate characters between those two taxa. All measurements are in mm, and all refer to males.

		Head+bill length	Bill length	Bill depth (at gonys)	Bill depth (at nostril)	Bill length/ bill depth at gonys	Tarsus	Wing
michahellis Mediterranean	Mean	131.7	57.0	20.1	18.1	2.9	69.6	454.6
	S.D.	4.1	3.2	1.1	1.0	0.1	2.8	7.7
	No.	13	15	16	16	14	11	11
cachinnans Black Sea	Mean	136.5	62.5	19.8	18.5	3.2	73.6	454.3
	S.D.	4.0	2.9	0.9	1.0	0.1	2.1	11.2
	No.	23	24	24	24	24	22	23
Two Polish gulls	1	135.2	61.2	20.1	18.5	3.04	79	465
	2	142	64.4	21.1	19.2	3.05	76	477
	Mean	138.6	62.8	20.6	18.9	3.05	78	471

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The Carl Zeiss Award 2001

The British Birds Rarities Committee, established in 1959, has been supported and sponsored by Carl Zeiss Ltd, the renowned German optical company, since 1983 (*Brit. Birds* 76: 475). To encourage the submission of photographs, as supporting evidence to accompany written descriptions of rarities, the Carl Zeiss Award was established in 1991 (*Brit. Birds* 84: 589). Photographs are an important, and sometimes critical, source of information, and are in many cases an integral part of record assessment by BBRC. Many photographs of rare birds are also an aesthetic delight, and frequently make the whole process of judging records that much more enjoyable. Recognising the importance of photographic evidence, and the role of photographers who supply the images, Carl Zeiss Ltd presents each year a pair of Carl Zeiss binoculars to the individual judged to have submitted the most instructive photograph, or series of photographs, of a British rarity. Judging the entries is undoubtedly one of the most pleasurable tasks in the working year of the Committee, and this year was no exception. From several hundred photographs submitted, we managed, eventually, to arrive at a short list of six. In Voous order, the six contenders were:

Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*	Paul Baxter & Harry Scott
American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*	Bryan Thomas
Pacific Golden Plover *P. fulva*	Iain H. Leach
Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*	Iain H. Leach
Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*	Dave Hatton
Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*	Gerry Owens

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On this occasion, the compilation of the short list was a long and difficult task, but, once we had done this, selecting the winner was comparatively easy. As discussed last year (*Brit. Birds* 93: 496-498), there was a natural tension between choosing photographs of major rarities and choosing those which showed key identification features of more regular but difficult species. Iain Leach's photographs of an Arctic Warbler on Spurn Point, East Yorkshire, not only were beautiful, but also permitted close scrutiny of the wing formula. In contrast, the series of photographs by Paul Baxter & Harry Scott of the Swinhoe's Storm-petrel trapped at Cove, Aberdeen, did not have the same aesthetic appeal but illustrated all the identification features of an extremely elusive seabird. Gerry Owens' portrait of the Yellow-breasted Bunting at Balcomie, Fife, neatly composed and set against the backdrop of the surrounding foliage, was an attractive and skilful piece of photography. All three appeared in the BBRC Annual Report, published recently (*Brit. Birds* 94: 452-504).

Excellent though these photographs were, we chose the remaining images for our top three this year. We were unable to decide between the photographs of the Pacific Golden Plover at Brough Haven, East Yorkshire, again by Iain Leach, and a series of photographs of a first-summer American Golden Plover on St Mary's, Scilly, by Bryan Thomas. In the end, we awarded them joint second place. The shot of the Pacific Golden Plover is technically excellent, showing this species' dusky underwing and axillaries to perfection. The series of images of the American Golden Plover is superb, in good light with the bird obviously very close; all are of particular interest because they illustrate a poorly known plumage of a relatively familiar species. Superficially, the individual portrayed here brings to mind one of the larger plovers in the genus *Charadrius*.

There were, however, no doubts about this year's winner, Dave Hatton's superb series of photographs of the female Collared Flycatcher, on North Ronaldsay, Orkney. Not only do these show many of the key plumage features with great clarity, but they were also obtained in very difficult circumstances, the bird appearing only intermittently for brief views, in overcast conditions.

Owing to delays in the submission of this record from 1999, these shots were considered as part of the complement of photographs for the 2000 report and, as such, represent a very worthy winner of the Carl Zeiss Award for 2001.

Dave Hatton becomes the tenth winner of the Carl Zeiss Award, and for his prize was able to choose either a Carl Zeiss 7×42BGAT* or one of the models from the 'Victory' range, either 8×40BT* or 10×40BT*; he selected the 10×40BT*.



Dave Hatton



Dave Hatton



Dave Hatton



Dave Hatton

298-301. Winner of THE CARL ZEISS AWARD 2001: Female Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, May 1999.



Iain H. Leach

302. Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva*, Brough Haven, East Yorkshire, July 2000.



Bryan Thomas



Bryan Thomas

303 & 304. First-summer American Golden Plover *Pluvialis dominica*, St Mary's, Scilly, May/June 2000.

Colin Bradshaw, Martin Eccles and Chris Kehoe
c/o 9 Tynemouth Place, North Shields, Tyne & Wear NE30 4BJ

Announcement

New Assistant Editor for British Birds

David Christie, who has been closely involved with *British Birds* for almost thirty years, has decided to reduce his work commitments, and will retire as *BB*'s Assistant Editor in April 2002. David's contribution to the journal has been truly enormous, and a proper appreciation of his role will appear in due course.

David's retirement creates a vacancy for the post of Assistant Editor, which is an exciting opportunity for a person with a wide knowledge of ornithology and first-rate editorial skills, preferably also with some appropriate experience of sub-editing. If you are interested in this position, which would be a part-time post, please contact Roger Riddington for further details (Chapel Cottage, Dunrossness, Shetland ZE2 9JH; e-mail: editor@britishbirds.co.uk).

Notes

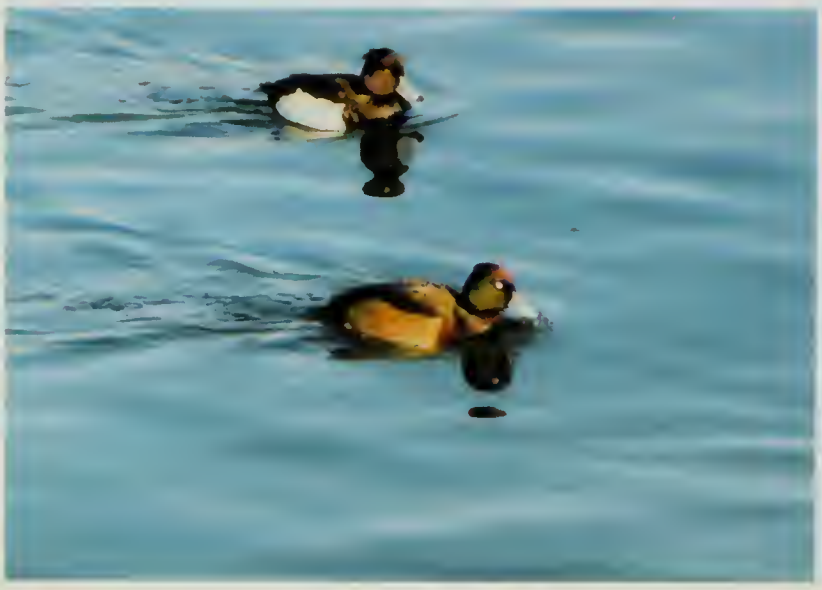
Identification of female Ferruginous Duck hybrids

A recent paper dealing with the identification of Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* (Vinicombe 2000) included some discussion on hybrids between that species and Common Pochard *A. ferina*. Vinicombe's advice, that if a putative Ferruginous Duck shows any anomalous feature, no matter how small, then hybrid parentage cannot be eliminated, is sound indeed. The treatment of female hybrids may, however, merit further comment, while it should also be remembered that hybrids between Ferruginous Duck and Tufted Duck *A. fuligula* are another potential pitfall (plate 305).

My own studies of hybrid wildfowl, in Germany, Switzerland and Austria, have included observation of 148 Common Pochard × Ferruginous Duck hybrids and 47 Ferruginous Duck × Tufted Duck hybrids (Randler 2000a & in press). Almost one-third of the former group were females, but I found no confirmed female Ferruginous × Tufted Duck hybrids.

Typically, male hybrids of Ferruginous Duck and Common Pochard are relatively easy to identify with the help of Vinicombe's paper (see, for example, plate 306). Female hybrids, such as those shown in plates 307-309, can, however, be problematical, especially if the bird is asleep. At first glance, and without seeing the all-important bill pattern, the individual in plate 307 could be identified as a female Ferruginous Duck. Some publications (e.g. Harris *et al.* 1989; Vinicombe 2000) illustrate hybrids with a sharp demarcation between a darker breast and paler flanks, which the individual in plate 307 lacks (having, instead, a much more diffuse border between the darker colour on the breast and the paler flanks). Hybrids can, however, be extremely variable, and other sources (Gillham & Gillham 1996; Gillham *et al.* 1966; Osborne 1972; Randler 2000b) confirm that not all hybrids show this pattern.

While many female Common Pochard × Ferruginous Duck hybrids appear superficially similar to Ferruginous Duck, the shape and pattern of the bill are the key features for correct identification. The bill is often longer, and deeper at the base, than that of pure Ferruginous, and



Beat Walser

305. Male hybrid Ferruginous Duck *A. nyroca* × Tufted Duck *A. fuligula*, location and date unknown.



Raffael Aye

306. Male hybrid Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* × Ferruginous Duck *A. nyroca*, Huningue, Alsace, France, February 1994.

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has a large black tip and a bluish subterminal band that is curled back towards the cutting edges. Sometimes, the typical head profile, similar to that of male hybrids, may indicate mixed parentage. Two further supporting characters may also give clues: the white in the undertail-coverts is often reduced or speckled with brown on hybrids, while on pure Ferruginous the body is more chocolate-coloured.

A growing awareness of the existence of hybrids has no doubt contributed to the increasing number of recent records, but other factors may also be relevant. Although the first Swiss breeding record of Ferruginous Duck was in 1995, and there have been up to three attempts since then (Winkler 1999), the breeding population of this species is declining in Austria and Germany (it may even be extinct in the latter country), and also in Poland, where the latest reports suggest only 40 breeding pairs at 20 sites (Wieloch 1998). Hybridisation occurs mainly at the extremities of the breeding range, which may explain why, for example, in Croatia (one of the species' key breeding areas: Wieloch 1998) hybridisation is very rare, while in Germany many hybrids are present during the winter.

I wish to thank Raffael Aye and Beat Walser for the use of their photographs.

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Raffael Aye

307. Female hybrid Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* × Ferruginous Duck *A. nyroca*, Huningue, Alsace, France, February 1994.



Raffael Aye

308. Female hybrid Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* × Ferruginous Duck *A. nyroca*, Huningue, Alsace, France, February 1994; same individual as in plate 307.



Beat Walser

309. Female hybrid Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* × Ferruginous Duck *A. nyroca*, Rapperswil, Switzerland, January 1990.

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Primary projection of Richard's Pipits

The extent of the visible projection of the primaries beyond the tertials on the folded wing is a useful means of separating similar species in groups as diverse as crakes *Porzana*, *Phylloscopus* warblers and shrikes *Lanius*. Pipits *Anthus* are a notoriously confusing genus in which many species show a range of structural similarities, including long tertials that cloak and obscure the primary tips. Most pipits do not, therefore, show a clear primary projection. The exception to this is the Pechora Pipit *A. gustavi*, which has a short projection of two primary tips, an important criterion by which to separate it from the superficially similar Red-throated Pipit *A. cervinus*.

Richard's Pipits *A. novaeseelandiae* are generally difficult to observe on the ground because of their habit of skulking in rough grass. In October 1987, I made some field sketches of an obliging individual in north Kent which showed a visible primary projection. I showed these sketches to the late Peter Grant, who queried the accuracy of this detail and suggested that it would be worthy of further scrutiny. Some years later, I was given the study skin of a first-winter Richard's Pipit of the race *richardi*, collected in China by F. W. Styan in October 1903, which also shows a prominent primary projection (plate 310). *BWP* (Vol. 5) states that the 'Longest tertial reaches to 0–3 mm from wing-tip in closed wing' on this species, whereas *The Handbook* states that the tip of the longest tertial falls just short of the fifth primary in winter, while after the spring moult it is often as long as the longest primary. Hall (1961) noted that all migrant races of Richard's Pipit are particularly subject to haphazard moult, but made no mention of the primary projection.

Subsequently, I visited the British Museum (Natural History), Tring, and examined the collection of Richard's Pipits, paying particular attention to the races *richardi*, *dauuricus*, *ussuriensis* and *centralasiae*. Among these were 45 specimens of *richardi* for which the month of collection was recorded. For these individuals, I measured the tertial moult score and the extent of visible primary projection on both wings;



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310. Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* of the race *richardi*, collected in China, October 1903.

where the primary projection was asymmetrical, the mean projection was noted. The specimens were aged by using criteria from Svensson (1992).

The variation in primary projection was found to be considerable, ranging from negligible to a maximum of 17 mm. In general, adults from the breeding grounds showed little or no primary projection, while first-autumn individuals showed the longest. The length of the primary projection was clearly greatest in mid-winter, and tended to decrease in spring (fig. 1), this probably being associated with the pre-breeding moult, which includes some or all of the tertials. This observation accords with the description in *The Handbook*, but contradicts the statement in *BWP*.

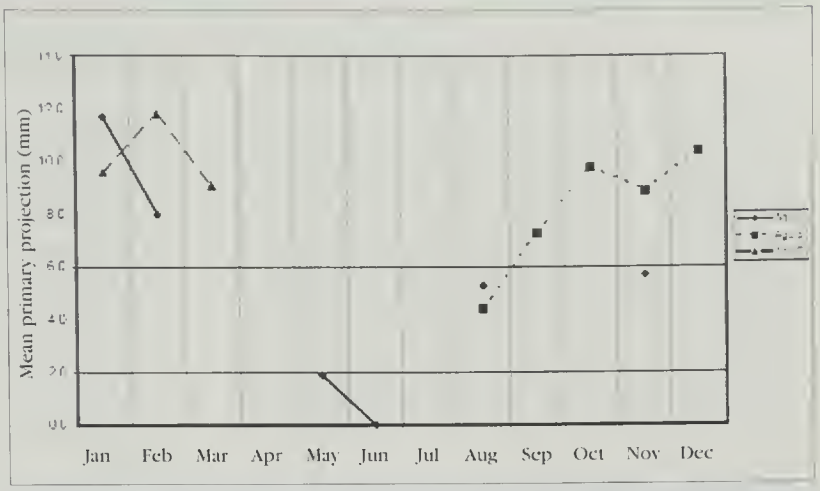


Fig. 1. Mean primary projection of Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae* at different times of year. Data are from 45 skins of the race *richardi*, measured at BMNH, Tring.

The presence of a visible primary projection on Richard's Pipits is seldom recorded, even by competent observers, presumably because of the difficulty of observing this species at close quarters. The character may, however, be worthy of further scrutiny, and could perhaps assist in the separation of this pipit from related taxa. Further work is necessary to clarify the nature and significance of a visible primary projection on larger pipits, but I would urge all observers to record it wherever possible.

I am grateful to Dr Robert Prys-Jones for allowing me access to the collections at Tring.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Brian Small has commented as follows: 'On the basis of a study of 29 individuals observed in the field in Britain, and reference to a large collection of published photographs, I concluded that less than 40% of Richard's Pipits show any significant primary projection in autumn. I also found that it was, in fact, more common for individuals having adult-like median coverts (i.e. either adults, or first-autumn birds which had moulted very early) to show this feature. On one bird it was possible to see two primary tips, extending 2-3 mm beyond the tip of the longest tertial, but on the majority the projection was only slight. Of ten Richard's Pipits seen well at Beidaihe, China, in spring 2001, one showed a small primary projection of two closely spaced primary tips, suggesting that primary projection might also reflect individual, as well as seasonal, variation.

'It may indeed be true that Richard's Pipits tend to show a slightly greater primary projection later in the winter, but, in practice, this is likely to be of little value as an identification feature of autumn migrants. Furthermore, from my own studies of skins and in the field, I suspect that Blyth's Pipits *A. godlewskii* may show similar individual variation in relative primary projection.

'Notwithstanding these comments, the fact that Richard's Pipits may have a primary projection is interesting in its own right and is not widely known, and it may well be worthy of further research and discussion. It would be particularly interesting to know whether the variability observed can be related to racial variation.'

Apparent hybrid redstarts in Finland resembling Black Redstart of eastern subspecies phoenicuroides

During 2000 and 2001, at least three redstarts *Phoenicurus* recorded in Finland have proved difficult to identify, and may, in fact, have been hybrids between Black Redstart *P. ochruros* and Common Redstart *P. phoenicurus*. Superficially at least, two of these closely resembled Black Redstart of the eastern subspecies *phoenicuroides*, which breeds in Central Asia and winters south to Arabia.

In September 2000, Risto Saranto found a strange-looking redstart at Porvoo, east of Helsinki. On 23rd April 2001, the same individual or a closely similar one returned to the area, and was observed singing. This redstart, a male, was trapped, measured and photographed on 25th April (plates 311 & 312; table 1), when a sound-recording was also made. It was aged as an adult (i.e. older than second-calendar-year), because the greater coverts all had greyish, rather than brownish, fringes and were uniformly worn. The redstart remained in the area until at least late June, and continued to sing. It frequented the centre of the old town, an area densely populated with low, wooden houses. The surroundings were, therefore, more typical of



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311 & 312. Redstart *Phoenicurus*, Porvoo, Finland, April 2001. Although the pattern of the underparts and the colour of the upperparts resemble those of Black Redstart *P. ochruros* of the eastern race *phoenicuroides*, the whitish edges to the tertials and innermost secondaries, forming an obvious pale panel in the wing, suggest that this may be a hybrid between Black and Common Redstarts *P. phoenicurus*.

those of Black Redstart, since Common Redstart is usually a bird of woodland and parkland habitats in Finland.

The song was very similar to that of Black Redstart. The initial component of the first phrase was very short, barely audible, and almost separate from the second component, which was slightly ascending and louder. The first phrase lasted about one second, followed by a short pause (varying from 0.2 to 0.8 seconds), then a rattling second phrase (lasting about one second), and finally a phrase similar to the opening one, but shorter (0.5-0.7 seconds) and of lower frequency.

During 2nd-11th May 2000, in Jyväskylä, central Finland, another problem redstart occurred. This was also sound-recorded, trapped and ringed. It proved to be a second-calendar-year male, and, as the Porvoo bird, it had a wing formula which resembled that of Black Redstart, with P6 emarginated and P2 equal to P7 (primaries numbered ascendently, with shortest outermost being P1), and a wing length of 82 mm. Although it was superficially very similar to the Porvoo redstart, the black area on the breast was not so uniform (some of the feathers showed grey fringes), there were grey fringes on some of the orange belly feathers as well, and the whitish area on the belly was more extensive. Some brownish areas were present on the upperparts, as on a second-calendar-year Common Redstart. There was also much less orange on the underwing-coverts, where only the greater coverts were primarily of this colour. Only a weak whitish panel was present on the closed wing, as would be expected for a second-calendar-year redstart, of any taxon. The song was extremely similar to the song of the Porvoo individual and, therefore, to that of a typical Black Redstart.

Finally, in the spring and summer of 2001, a singing redstart in Tampere, south-central Finland, was initially identified as a second-calendar-year male Black Redstart. It was paired with a typical female Common Redstart. When the two began feeding young, they became easier to see. Observers noticed that the male looked a little odd (plate 313). Unlike the two individuals described above, it was very similar to a second-calendar-year male Black Redstart of the '*paradoxus*' morph, with greyish tips on the blackish feathers of the throat and breast and with worn, brownish wings lacking a white panel (see Svensson 1992; Nicolai *et al.* 1996), but the underparts were surprisingly pale and were reddish-toned. This colour, although not easy to see in the field, was sufficiently distinct to create suspicion about the bird's parentage. This male's song and calls were very much like those of a Black Redstart. Some observers, however, felt that its 'jizz' was more like that of Common Redstart than that of Black Redstart.

The redstarts seen at Porvoo and Jyväskylä closely resemble the subspecies

313. Redstart *Phoenicurus*, Tampere, Finland, summer 2001. The underparts of this individual seem too pale for Black Redstart *P. ochruros*, while the slight but perceptible reddish tone also does not fit that species. Considered possibly a hybrid between Black and Common Redstarts *P. phoenicurus*.



Pekka Komi

phoenicuroides of the Black Redstart. The extensive orange-red of the underparts, and the sharp division between that colour and the black of the throat and upper breast, are almost identical to the pattern found in that subspecies, while the colour of the upperparts is also quite similar to that of *phoenicuroides*. The Porvoo individual, however, had a distinct white wing-patch and is considered most likely, therefore, to have been a hybrid between Black Redstart and Common Redstart. Typically, *phoenicuroides* should have, at most, an indistinct white wing-patch (as a fresh adult male). The extensive pale patch on the belly and vent may also indicate hybrid parentage. The wing formula of this bird fits that of Black Redstart (table 1), although P3 is longer than typically found on the latter (and is more similar in length to that of Common Redstart; see Nicolai *et al.* 1996).

It is more difficult to exclude *phoenicuroides* in the case of the Jyväskylä redstart, but here, too, a hybrid solution is perhaps more likely.

Black Redstart is a rare breeder in Finland, whereas Common Redstart is widespread in the country. The conditions for occasional hybridisation seem, therefore, to be favourable and, indeed, there are several documented cases of such hybrids in Finland (e.g. Ukkonen 1992), as well as in other countries. For example, Andersson (1988) lists four almost certain cases in Sweden.

In the past, there has been some confusion over the identification of hybrids, and their separation from *phoenicuroides*, and there was formerly a school of thought that hybrids cannot show a clear-cut division between black and orange on the breast. For example, Olsson (1994) described one apparent hybrid which was initially accepted by the Swedish rarities committee as belonging to one of the eastern subspecies of Black Redstart. Nicolai *et al.* (1996), in discussing the identification of hybrids, described several individuals, even some artificially bred hybrids, which were very similar to the Porvoo and Jyväskylä redstarts. They concluded that the identification of *phoenicuroides* in Western Europe may be impossible, at least in some cases. Of course, not all male hybrids resemble *phoenicuroides*; Andersson (1988) described one which appeared quite similar to the form '*paradoxus*' of Black Redstart, but with a white

Table 1. Biometrics (in mm) of redstart *Phoenicurus* at Porvoo, Finland, April 2001, compared with those of adult male Black Redstart *P.ochruros* of races *gibraltariensis* and *phoenicuroides* and Common Redstart *P.phoenicurus* of nominate race.
Measurements of Porvoo individual by Hannu Jännes; data on wing, bill, tarsus and primary-emargination lengths of *gibraltariensis* from Nicolai *et al.* (1996); all other measurements from Cramp (1988).

	Porvoo individual	*P.o. gibraltariensis*	*P.o. phoenicuroides*	*P.p. phoenicurus*
Wing length	89.0	79-90	80-85	77-84
Bill length to skull	15.6	13.6-17.0	14.2-16.6	13.6-15.9
Tarsus length	21.4	22.2-24.6	22.9-25.0	20.5-23.2
P1 (mm > primary coverts)	5	4-11		2-8
P2 (mm < wing-point)	8	8-13		5-10
P3 (mm < wing-point)	0	0-2.5		0-1
P4 (mm < wing-point)	0	0		0-1
P5 (mm < wing-point)	1	0-1		1-3
P6 (mm < wing-point)	5.5	2-4		5-10
P7 (mm < wing-point)	11	8-12		10-14
P8 (mm < wing-point)	14	11-16		
P9 (mm < wing-point)	17			
P10 (mm < wing-point)	20	16-21	13-20	17-22
Secondaries	23			
Length of primary emarginations:				
P3	32.5	32 (mean)		Present
P4	24	25 (mean)		Present
P5	19	21 (mean)		Present
P6	12	16 (mean)		Absent

forehead patch, which is interesting in the light of the Tampere individual described above.

It is perhaps remarkable that the songs of the three individuals described here resembled that of Black Redstart. Some observers, of both the Porvoo and the Jyväskylä birds, claimed to have heard some strange elements in the songs, mentioning in particular that they were more melodious than a typical Black Redstart song. Taking into account the great variation in the latter's songs, the recorded vocalisations of these three Finnish redstarts are, however, perhaps inseparable from those of that species. It should be noted that hybrid redstarts may also sing quite differently from both parent species (Andersson 1988).

In summary, I would urge any observers in Western Europe who encounter a redstart resembling Black Redstart of the race *phoenicuroides* to endeavour to obtain sound-recordings and measurements of the individual. Clearly, we still have much to learn about the true status of *phoenicuroides* in Western Europe, and about the variability of hybrids between Black Redstart and Common Redstart.

Details of the Porvoo redstart appeared on the Internet, and I thank all those who commented. Special thanks are due to Risto Saranto for locating that individual, and to Hannu Jännes and Visa Rauste for helping me to trap it. I am grateful also to Tero Linjama, Hannu Tammelin and Tero Toivanen (the observers of the Jyväskylä individual), and to Markku Kangasniemi, Pekka Komi and Lauri Mustalahti (observers of the Tampere individual); to Eelis Rissanen for help with references; and to Annika Forsten for assistance with the manuscript.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT Tony Marr, Chairman of the British Ornithologists' Union Records Committee, has commented: 'A review of all the British records of "eastern" Black Redstarts (covering the races *ochruros*, *phoenicuroides* and *semirufus*) has recently taken place, and has concluded that it is impossible to eliminate the possibility that past claims of these forms have referred to hybrids between Black Redstart and Common Redstart. This group will, therefore, be removed from the British List, and a note to this effect is currently in preparation for publication in *Ibis*.'

Wren attaching faecal sacs to cable

On 7th June 1998, my wife and I were birdwatching near the Ramsey ferry terminal at St Justinians, Pembrokeshire. A Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* flew overhead, carrying a faecal sac, and perched on a lighting cable running to a nearby hut. Very gently, it stuck the sac to the top of the cable and, after singing, flew away. Upon closer examination, the cable was found to hold five or six further sacs.

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EDITORIAL COMMENT This behaviour may not, in fact, be atypical, but it appears to be poorly documented. Similar behaviour by a Eurasian Treecreeper *Certhia familiaris* in Surrey was reported in an earlier note (*Brit. Birds* 79: 43).

Letters

Ruddy Ducks in Europe

With regard to Bernard Zonfrillo's comments on the UK's trial cull of Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* (*Brit. Birds* 93: 394-396; 94: 149), I agree with him that non-native species should not all be treated in the same way (the IUCN guidelines on invasive species clearly state that not all introductions threaten biodiversity: IUCN 2000), and that we must concentrate our actions upon those species which have a significant impact. This is a complex objective, because our ability to predict the long-term effects of a recently introduced species is often limited, making it difficult to decide upon a sensible course of action. Where the available evidence suggests the potential for a significant impact on a native species, especially one which is already globally threatened, such as the White-headed Duck *O. leucocephala* (BirdLife International 2000), then action should not, however, be delayed.

Zonfrillo's proposal to use the resources available for conducting a trial cull in the UK for more detailed studies of Ruddy Duck movements seems very risky, and, given the weight of evidence already amassed, is in contradiction to the precautionary approach advocated by the IUCN guidelines. He ignores, for example, the strong correlation that exists between increasing numbers of Ruddy Ducks in the UK and the number of Continental records (Hughes *et al.* 1999), and the flocks of 40-50 Ruddy Ducks which now winter each year at Lac de Grand Lieu, in northwest France.

Commenting on the conservation risks posed by hybridisation, Zonfrillo argues (93: 394-396) that in most, if not all, cases this does not carry a significant extinction risk. The point which he appears to be missing is that once a species' gene pool is extensively modified by introgression, as has happened with the New Zealand Grey Duck *Anas superciliosa superciliosa* (Gillespie 1985), it is impossible to recover it. The scale of the problem should not be underestimated; naturalised Mallards *A. platyrhynchos*, for instance, are threatening seven other distinct species or subspecies of the genus *Anas* through introgressive hybridisation (Engilis & Pratt 1993; Meredino & Ankney 1994). Furthermore, this type of extinction threat is not exclusive to waterfowl, or to birds. The Seychelles Turtle Dove *Streptopelia picturata rostrata* is thought now to be extinct following hybridisation with *S. p. picturata*, introduced from Madagascar (Cade 1983); and the Florida Panther *Felis concolor coryi* is threatened as a result of hybridisation with naturalised Latin American cats (O'Brien *et al.* 1990), while the Red Deer *Cervus elaphus* and the Wild Cat *F. silvestris* share a similar fate in the UK through hybridisation with, respectively, Sika Deer *C. nippon* and Domestic Cat *F. catus* (Balharry *et al.* 1994).

Zonfrillo concludes (93: 394-396) that the hybridisation recorded in Spain between the Ruddy Duck and the White-headed Duck is probably irrelevant to the evolutionary maintenance of both populations. Comparing cases of hybridisation between two native species (e.g. Common Pochard *Aythya ferina* and Tufted Duck *A. fuligula*) with genetic swamping caused by introduced species (e.g. Mallard × Grey Duck) does not, however, help to define the true degree of threat. In the case of naturally occurring hybridisation, where both species maintain distinct gene pools, mechanisms exist to limit gene introgression (e.g. Rock Partridge *Alectoris graeca* × Red-legged Partridge *A. rufa*: Randi & Bernard-Laurent 1999). Those barriers do not exist between the two *Oxyura* species, owing to the evolutionary isolation imposed until recently by the Atlantic Ocean. Because of this, and differences in their respective breeding strategies (Hughes 1996), the indications are that introgression will progress rapidly, resulting very swiftly in the loss of the White-headed Duck as a distinct species.

It is, therefore, vital that Ruddy Duck numbers in northwest Europe are quickly reduced. If Ruddy Ducks are allowed to reach the main White-headed Duck population in Eastern Europe, then our chance to save this species from extinction will have gone. A number of European governments, including that of Britain, recognise this and are taking action to cull Ruddy Ducks. The

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rest must now follow suit: we really do not have much time left if we are to secure the White-headed Duck's future.

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The Iceland Gull complex in Greenland

MeGowan & Kitehener (2001), in their historieal and taxonomie review of the Iceland Gull *Larus glaucoides* eomplex, suggested that the form *kumlieni* is a hybrid population between the subspeeies *glaucoides* and *thayeri*, a hypothesis whieh I find very eonvineing. I should like to supplement their review with some reeent and mainly unpublished information from Greenland, where all three subspeeies oeeur.

The eommon and widespread large gull in low-aretie Greenland is *glaucoides*, breeding eolonially along the coasts as far north as 74°N in west Greenland and 66°N in east Greenland. It may, however, breed even farther north in west Greenland, sinee I saw a pair feeding newly fledged young in the Thule district (77°N) in 1995.

Ten years ago, *kumlieni* was eonsidered a rare vagrant to Greenland, mainly in winter, with only nine published reeords (Boertmann 1994). These ineluded a rather strange breeding reeord, involving a ehiek captured in west Greenland, and held in eaptivity in Austria, whieh showed *kumlieni* wingtip markings when it attained adult plumage (Goethe 1986). A recent inerease in observations at Nuuk, west Greenland (64°N), however, has revealed that *kumlieni* occurs regularly throughout the winter, from mid-August to early May, in small numbers (up to 1% of the number of *glaucoides* present). Farther north still, in the Disko Bay area (69°N), in late April 1996, I saw at least ten different adult *kumlieni* among thousands of *glaucoides* attraeted to a fish factory. These ten showed a marked variation in wingtip melanism (ranging from one dark grey outer-primary vane to almost blaek markings on the upper side), as well as in iris colour (ranging from pale to dark, and not correlated with wingtip melanism).

During the summer, on the other hand, although I have observed tens of thousands of Ieeland Gulls since 1974, in almost all parts of west Greenland, I have seen only one *kumlieni*, in the Thule district in 1998. In the summer of 2001, however, a *kumlieni* was found brooding in a colony of *glaucoides* and Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* near Nuuk (M. Kviesgaard & L. Witting *in litt.*); unfortunately, its mate was not seen.

The westernmost form, *thayeri*, bred in small numbers in the Thule distriet, in northernmost west Greenland, in the 1920s and 1930s (Salomonsen 1950). In reeent years,

many ornithologists have worked in this area, but have never reported *thayeri*, although I have urged them to look for this particular taxon. The only published records of *thayeri* from this district in recent years are of a small number of individuals seen in early autumn 1987 at Thule Air Base, and a few adults which I saw at the same site in 1994 and 1995. Outwith the Thule district, *thayeri* has been recorded a few times in spring and summer in the central and northern parts of west Greenland (Boertmann & Mosbech 1999).

All in all, therefore, *glaucoides* is the widespread and common subspecies of the Iceland Gull in low-arctic Greenland. The intermediate form, *kumlieni*, seems to be increasing as a winter visitor (although this could also be explained, at least in part, by an increase in ornithological activity during the same period), but only two breeding records are known. The form *thayeri* has probably disappeared from Greenland as a breeding bird, but occurs as a spring and summer vagrant.

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A further comment on House Crows

In his recent letter, Bill Bourne graphically defined the threat associated with the spread of House Crows *Corvus splendens* (*Brit. Birds* 94: 291). Having monitored this species' range expansion (which has been mainly ship-assisted) since the mid 1980s, I can confirm that it has attained pest status virtually everywhere where a population has become established, as a predator of native bird species, a crop-raider, a potential public-health risk, and a general nuisance. As a consequence, control/eradication programmes have been or are being initiated in many areas. A sobering fact is that, to my knowledge, only one of these campaigns can really be considered to have been successful; this is in the Seychelles, where the small breeding population seems to have been eradicated, although there may still be some stragglers. On the other hand, the 'shoot-on-sight' policy adopted in Australia has proved very successful in preventing House Crows from becoming established there, despite numerous arrivals during the twentieth century on board ships from the Indian Subcontinent.

The House Crow's spread has been summarised in the British Ornithologists' Club Bulletin (*Bull. BOC* 114: 90-100; 115: 185-187), with an update shortly to be submitted. According to my records, the species has so far established breeding populations in about 20 countries outside its native range, while solitary individuals have turned up in about ten others.

With regard to the population in the Netherlands, I would tentatively recommend a precautionary approach, with the aim of eradication while this is still possible. The most likely scenario is, however, that the House Crows will remain a local attraction to birdwatchers. If the Dutch population does expand, it seems probable that nothing will be done until it is too late to take any effective action without great difficulty. Having been labelled 'crowist' a few years ago by the editor of a leading wildlife magazine, I am reluctant to make other than guarded statements on this topic.

Incidentally, *splendens* is, in fact, a rather appropriate name for the species, since it refers to its shiny plumage, and not to its behaviour.

Dr Colin Ryall

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Monthly Marathon

Monthly Marathon photo number 180 (plate 220, repeated here as plate 314) clearly features a small wader, apparently one of the calidrine species, and it appears to be in practically complete non-breeding plumage (although the retained dark inner median covert and tertials appear to be juvenile feathers, which would indicate a first-year rather than an adult). The immediate impression suggests that it is one of the four dark-legged stints (or 'peeps'), i.e. Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*, Western Sandpiper *C. mauri*, Red-necked Stint *C. ruficollis* or Little Stint *C. minuta*, though some more cautious participants in this competition may have been inclined to extend the frame to include two slightly larger members of the genus, the geographically variable Dunlin *C. alpina* and the ubiquitous Sanderling *C. alba*. The latter can be rather easily eliminated on a number of characters, perhaps most conclusively on the wing pattern: a Sanderling would have a much stronger white wingbar, particularly striking across the primaries, and the wingbar would be bordered more boldly with black.



Wayne Richardson

314. Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri*, Florida, USA, late winter 1999.

Firmly excluding Dunlin is not quite so easy, since some individuals of that species are as short-billed as the mystery bird, while the latter's upperparts and wing pattern closely resemble those of Dunlin. On the other hand, the whiteness of the face and the relative prominence of the supercilium, although features open to subjective judgment, suggest one of the stints more than they do Dunlin. The length of the bill in relation to the head seems just a shade too long for Red-necked Stint or Little Stint, though occasionally the bill of the latter can be almost as long as the mystery wader's. Most Little Stints in non-breeding plumage do, however, show some suggestion of diffuse darker centres to some scapular feathers (especially the large, rearmost ones), rather than the discrete dark shaft-streak typically exhibited by the other species and by our mystery bird, which strengthens the case for eliminating Little Stint.

The almost 'club-footed' look of the hanging foot (or feet?) possibly indicates the presence of palmations between the toes, which would further support our narrowing the choice to one or the other of a notoriously difficult pair (especially in non-breeding plumage), the Semipalmated and Western Sandpipers.

The ground-breaking paper by Lars Jonsson and the late Peter J. Grant (*Brit. Birds* 77: 293-315) was the first to describe and illustrate the subtle differences in head pattern between Semipalmated and Western Sandpipers in non-breeding plumage. In this photo, the less distinct eye-ring, poorly marked loral stripe and comparatively light ear-coverts all suggest Western Sandpiper, and at this point many of us may rely on instinct and simply guess the final answer. The process of bird identification, however, operates on a variety of levels, both conscious



315. 'Monthly Marathon'. Photo no. 183. Thirty-first stage in eleventh 'Marathon' or first stage in twelfth. Identify the species. Read the rules (see page 55), then send in your answer *on a postcard* to Monthly Marathon, c/o The Banks, Mountfield, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY, *or by e-mail* to editor@britishbirds.co.uk, *to arrive by 30th December 2001*.

and subconscious, so that even such 'guesses' will often be based on information that has been analysed and interpreted, albeit subconsciously.

When it comes to solving the problems posed by mystery photographs, which, it has to be said, are often very different from the ones that we encounter in the field, it may be a good idea to devote a few minutes to some lateral thinking, and consider any circumstantial evidence that may be gleaned from the photo. In this case, the bright sunshine, the sandy terrain and the fact that the subject was clearly quite confiding are all reminiscent of conditions that prevail in the southern United States. Following this hunch, it is not unreasonable to take into consideration the comparative dearth of photographs of non-breeding-plumaged Semipalmated Sandpipers since, unlike Westerns, they winter farther south and generally do not acquire such advanced non-breeding plumage until they have left North American territory.

So, all things considered, the overwhelming likelihood is that this bird is a Western Sandpiper; it was photographed by Wayne Richardson in Florida, in late winter 1999.

The majority of entrants in this round hit upon the correct solution, with 77% voting for Western Sandpiper. Of the rest, 14% plumped for Semipalmated Sandpiper, while there were also single votes for Sanderling and Little Stint.

For the third round in succession, the leading contestants in this 'Marathon' cleared the hurdle without mishap. So, we still have Peter Lansdown, Andy Mears and Peter Sunesen out in front, each with a sequence of 15 correct answers, while Jon Holt remains just one place behind, with 14-in-a-row.

Killian Mullarney

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Rarities Committee news

BBRC seeks new member with a knowledge of Scotland

Ken Shaw, as the longest-serving member of BBRC, is due to retire on 1st April 2002. Ken has been a member of the BBRC since 1994 and has helped us considerably with his wide knowledge of both birds and observers. He has taken a particular interest in seabird records, and in the psychology of birding and birders. We are now seeking a replacement with the usual attributes required for membership of BBRC. The prime qualifications needed by of candidates are:

- a widely acknowledged expertise in identification
- proven reliability in the field
- a track record of high-quality submissions of descriptions of scarce and rare birds to county records committees and BBRC
- considerable experience of record assessment
- the capacity to handle the substantial volume of work involved in assessing upwards of 1,000 records per year
- the capacity to work quickly and efficiently

The BBRC is asking for nominations of individuals with these attributes and with a sound working knowledge of birds and birders in Scotland.

The BBRC's nominee is John Sweeney, who lives in Paisley, in the west of Scotland, and has a track record of regularly finding rare birds in an area not well known for its potential for attracting vagrants. His birdwatching is now almost exclusively confined to Scotland, although he has travelled throughout Europe and Canada. John gained a PhD for his thesis on the sex life of the Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, and has a particular interest in gulls *Larus*. He has an extensive knowledge of Scottish observers, and is one of the few Paisley birders of his generation who has not seen Cape May Warbler *Dendroica tigrina* in Britain.

Other nominations, with a proposer and seconder, and the written agreement of the nominee, should be sent to the Chairman of the BBRC before 1st January 2002, after which date a voting slip and a list of candidates with relevant details will be sent to all County Recorders and bird-observatory wardens.

For more information, telephone Colin Bradshaw on 0191 2572389.

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The British Birds Rarities Committee is sponsored by Carl Zeiss Ltd.

Chairman: Colin Bradshaw, 9 Tynemouth Place, Tynemouth, Tyne & Wear NE30 4BJ
Secretary: M. J. Rogers, 2 Churchtown Cottages, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ

News and comment

Compiled by Bob Scott and Adrian Pitches

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of *British Birds*

RSPB continues to acquire reserves

The RSPB has substantially increased its annual allocation for the purchase and management of reserves within the UK. Is this an indication that the 'powers that be' within the Society appreciate that, in the long term, it is only through a network of reserves that wildlife can be safeguarded within these crowded islands? Over the years, attempts to preserve habitats and species by designation (and the associated, rather inefficient, legal back-up) have not served us well, but reserves such as Wicken Fen (Cambridgeshire), Minsmere (Suffolk) and Dungeness (Kent) still remain.

With help from the Heritage Lottery Fund and EU LIFE Nature, the Society has recently purchased the Dorrery Estate and part of Dorrery Farm, which lie within the Loch Caluim Flows SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), in the north of Scotland. This area is widely regarded as one of the largest and most important blanket bogs in the world. Fortuitously, it also separates the Society's Forsinard reserve and the Strathmore Estate, which the Society manages in partnership with Lord Thurso. The area's bog habitats, pristine pools and mires support several species of key conservation importance, including the following breeding birds: Black-throated Diver *Gavia arctica*, native Greylag Goose *Anser anser*, Eurasian Wigeon *Anas penelope*, Common Scoter *Melanitta nigra*, European Golden Plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Dunlin *Calidris alpina* and Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*.

Other recent acquisitions include Brading Marshes on the Isle of Wight, the first RSPB reserve on the island. The new reserve consists of 168 ha of wet grassland, open water, reedbed and some ancient woodland. Much of the site had previously been designated as a SSSI but, with this purchase, its future is now assured.

Egg-collector jailed in landmark conviction

PC Paul Henery, wildlife liaison officer for Northumbria Police (and known to *BB*-readers as the winner of the Bird Illustrator of the Year competition in 1998), was instrumental in ensuring a successful outcome to a recent egg-collecting prosecution. Barry Sheavils, from Blyth in Northumberland, was sentenced to four months' imprisonment at Bedlington Magistrates Court on 7th September 2001: the first person in the UK to be jailed for illegally collecting the eggs of wild birds. Sheavils has four previous convictions for egg-collecting, the most recent being in May 2001, when he was convicted for possessing over 1,200 wild-bird eggs, for which he was fined £1,000. For this subsequent offence, Sheavils was charged under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act which came into force in England and Wales in January this year, strengthening the Wildlife and Countryside Act. Under the new Act, courts have been given a wider range of sentencing options, including jail terms for those persistent criminals for whom fines are clearly not a sufficient deterrent. In Scotland, the RSPB is calling for a similar strengthening of wildlife-protection legislation. Graham Elliot, head of the RSPB's investigations section, commented that: 'It is essential that the courts have the option of custodial sentences when dealing with particularly serious offences or persistent offenders, so that our wildlife can have the protection it deserves'.

Nesting Ospreys lure tourists back to Lakeland

The first Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* chick to have been reared in the English Lake District for at least 150 years took its first flight on 10th August 2001. The nest, on the west side of Bassenthwaite Lake, proved an extremely popular attraction for visitors in a summer when much of the Cumbrian countryside was closed by foot-and-mouth restrictions, and was a fitting tribute to the Lake District National Park in the year of its 50th anniversary.

The Ospreys nested on a special platform erected by the Forestry Commission and the Lake District National Park Authority. The nest was kept under round-the-clock surveillance to prevent disturbance or the theft of the eggs. The chick, thought to be a male, was last seen in the Bassenthwaite area on 13th September. A special Osprey viewing point, which attracted more than 25,000 visitors, was established at Dodd Wood, on the east side of the lake, by the Forestry Commission, the National Park Authority and the RSPB.

The Lakeland pair is believed to have recolonised England naturally as a result of the population expansion in Scotland, which followed the return of Ospreys to the Highlands in the 1950s (after they had been extinct in the UK for over 50 years). A diary of the Bassenthwaite Ospreys' breeding season, and details of where to find the watchpoint for next year, can be found at www.ospreywatch.co.uk

This year's events in the Lake District coincided with the first successful nesting attempt by the reintroduced Ospreys at Rutland Water, in central England.

Jailed parrot-smuggler faces a further £150,000 fine

In April 2000, following a conviction for importing three Lear's Macaws *Anodorhynchus leari*, a critically endangered species, Harry Sissen was jailed at Newcastle Crown Court for two-and-a-half years. Only 150 Lear's Macaws remain in the world, and Sissens was caught smuggling three across Europe in a car boot to his North Yorkshire aviaries. This was a major triumph for HM Customs & Excise, who prosecuted Sissen under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Following his early release from prison, HM Customs took Sissen back to court on 27th September 2001, claiming that he had made more than £400,000 from parrot-smuggling. Sissen was ordered to pay £150,000, and will be jailed for 21 months if he does not pay the confiscation-order money within nine months.

For more information about the blue macaws (Hyacinth *A. hyacinthinus*, Lear's, Glaucous *A. glaucus* and Spix's *Cyanopsitta spixii*), visit www.bluemacaws.org

FMD veils Hen Harrier persecution

The RSPB Species Policy Unit knows of only three successful Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* nests in England in 2001, and none of these was in the species' former stronghold, on the Cumbria/Northumberland border. These counties have been a hotspot for foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) since its outbreak in February 2001. There has consequently been a lack of public access to the moorlands of the North Pennines, much of which is private land. Historically, this area has been a notorious one for harrier persecution, with records of birds being shot and poisoned, and of nestlings being stamped to death. Raptor enthusiasts fear that those harriers which did attempt to breed in 2001 may have met a similar fate, and the lack of access to walkers, birdwatchers and conservation staff has meant that there has been very little chance of such incidents being reported.

The number of successful Hen Harrier nests in northern England during the past five years is as follows:

1997: 11 pairs (six in Lancashire, five elsewhere)
1998: seven pairs (six in Lancashire, one in Northumberland)
1999: nine pairs (five in Lancashire, two in Northumberland, two in Cumbria)
2000: five pairs (four in Lancashire, one in Cumbria)
2001: three pairs (all in Lancashire)

The Game Conservancy Trust has calculated that there is sufficient habitat in northern England to support 232 nests of Hen Harriers; so, where are the other 229? The much-vaunted 'right to roam' across private moorland, enshrined in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, which will allow greater public scrutiny of 'forbidden Britain', will not come into force until at least 2005. Can we hope that this will aid the harrier population? There can be little doubt that the Hen Harrier carries the label of 'Britain's most persecuted bird species'.

Roseates do well in boxes

In 2001, 42 pairs of Roseate Terns *Sterna dougallii* nested on Coquet Island, off the Northumberland coast. This internationally important population had one of its best breeding seasons ever in 2001, with at least 55 young being raised. Coquet Island, off the seaside town of Amble, is an RSPB reserve and, although there is no public access, it is possible to arrange a boat trip around the island. The success this year is attributed, in part, to the provision of terraced areas complete with special nestboxes to protect the terns' nests, eggs and chicks from bad weather and predators. The use of the nestboxes by the terns has more than doubled since last year, and at one stage no fewer than 40 of the boxes either contained Roseate Terns' eggs or provided shelter for chicks.

The RSPB's conservation work on this species is carried out in partnership with the Northumbrian Water Environmental Trust (NWET), which is a UK Species Champion for the Roseate Tern. Farther north along the Northumberland coast, a single pair of Roseates nested on the Farne Islands, where it reared a single chick. Perhaps nestboxes may help this colony also to return to its former strength; in 1953, there were 98 pairs of Roseate Terns on the Farne Islands. Further details are available from RSPB North England Regional Office, 4 Benton Terrace, Sandyford Road, Newcastle NE2 1QU.

RSPB 'Disabled Access'

The RSPB has updated its leaflet on 'Disabled Access to Reserves'. The new edition contains much more information than did earlier versions, including details of the nearest adapted toilet facilities, gradients of slopes, details of path surfaces, hides and view points. Free copies are available from RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2DL.

A yen for birding this autumn

Turn those field notes into hard cash! The seventh annual World Bird Count (WBC), sponsored by the Japanese telecommunications giant NTT-ME, takes place during October 2001. NTT-ME has pledged to donate 1,000 yen (about £5.00) to BirdLife International for every species logged worldwide during the month of October, up to a maximum of 5 million yen (5,000 species). Last year, observers in 86 countries submitted details of all the birds that they had seen during October and, with a final tally of 5,273 species, they broke the bank! Since the first WBC in 1995, NTT-ME's annual donation to BirdLife International has been used to promote the conservation of birds and their habitats in Asia. Most recently, Birdlife has used the funds to assist in the publication of the landmark *Threatened Birds of Asia*. The entire book (with details of the 342 most threatened Oriental birds and a further 323 near-threatened species) can be viewed online, at www.rdb.or.id/home.html, and downloaded. The donation from the seventh World Bird Count will be used to save threatened birds listed in this publication.

To participate in this very worthwhile exercise, you can e-mail (wbc@wnn.ne.jp) or fax (+81 42 593-6873) your list of species seen, or heard, during October 2001 to the organisers. Contributions must arrive by 20th November, and remember to include dates of your birding trips, the locations (site and country), your name as main observer, the number of people in your group, your e-mail address and/or fax number, and any comments which you may have about your birding trips in October.

Further details are available on the WBC website, at www.wnn.ne.jp/wbc. In addition, for details of the BirdLife International World Bird Festival, of which the bird count is part, see www.birdlife.net or contact Monica Rivas on (01223) 277318 (e-mail: monica.rivas@birdlife.org.uk).

Italian rarities committees

In the July issue, we reported that a new Italian rarities committee, the CIR (Comitato Italiano Rarita), has recently been established (*Brit. Birds* 94: 335). Andrea Corso has asked us to remind readers that the new committee will work alongside, but *not replace*, the COI (Comitato Italiano d'Omologazione), which has adjudicated on records of rare birds since 1984. Instead, the Italians aim to instigate a system of close co-operation between the two bodies to deal with the increasing volume of records, akin to that which exists in Britain between BOURC and BBRC.

Thus, COI will assess records of species which have been recorded in Italy ten or fewer times, while the CIR will deal with more regular rarities. We apologise for any misunderstanding caused.

Garden birds in Ireland and UK

BirdWatch Ireland (BWI) and the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) both undertake garden bird surveys, part of the analysis of which involves calculating the percentage of gardens recording the different species. The table below lists the most recent top ten from each survey.

In the UK, the Magpie squeezes in at number 12, while the Song Thrush and the Wren do not appear in even the top twenty! In Ireland, Hedge Accentor (Dunnock) and Common Starling make it to 12 and 13 respectively, while the Collared Dove is way down at 19th, behind both Pied Wagtail *Motacilla alba* and Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*.

For more details, contact BWI, 8 Longford Place, Monkstown, Co. Dublin (e-mail: bird@indigo.ie), or BTO, The Nunnery, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 2PU (e-mail: btostaff@bto.org).

Ireland		***UK***	
Robin *Erithacus rubecula*	99%	Blue Tit	100%
Blackbird *Turdus merula*	99%	Blackbird	99.6%
Blue Tit *Parus caeruleus*	98%	Robin	99.6%
Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*	93%	Great Tit	98.2%
Magpie *Pica pica*	93%	Hedge Accentor *Prunella modularis*	97.1%
Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*	90%	Greenfinch	96%
Great Tit *Parus major*	89%	Common Chaffinch	95%
Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*	84%	Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto*	88.7%
Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*	83%	House Sparrow	88.5%
House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*	80%	Common Starling *Sturnus vulgaris*	88.1%

Review

RAPTORS OF THE WORLD

By James Ferguson-Lees & David A. Christie. Illustrated by Kim Franklin, David Mead & Philip Burton. Christopher Helm, A & C Black, London, 2001. 992 pages; 112 colour plates; maps; line-drawings. ISBN 0-7136-8026-1. Hardback, £49.00.

The birdwatching world has been waiting nearly two decades for this book. Had it appeared on schedule, in the 1980s, it would surely have been heralded as a classic. Now, readers will judge for themselves whether this is still the case. Does it add significantly to the backdrop of excellent regional guides and handbooks (including those dealing specifically with raptors) that have been published during its long gestation period? The appearance in 1994 of volume 2 of the *Handbook of the Birds of the World*, which deals with birds of prey, will also have an impact on people's reactions to this new book. Notwithstanding, this is the first book to be published that covers all of the world's raptors in sufficient detail for serious identification purposes and, furthermore, it succeeds.

First, let me describe the tome. It is in the same 'Helm' series as *Seabirds*, *Shorebirds* and *Wildfowl*. With its 992 pages, it is, however, more than twice as thick as any of those. This is not the result of its dealing with many more species (it covers 313 raptor species, compared with, for example, 312 in *Seabirds*), but because it contains no fewer than 620 pages of detailed species texts.

The introductory sections cover the following topics in moderate detail: topography; measuring raptors; sex and age differences; identification techniques; migration; moult and ageing; vision and hearing; plumages and structure; taxonomy and nomenclature; and, finally, English names. All are well researched, although sometimes too detailed and pedantic. The short summary on migration is succinct and very useful. Almost by definition, taxonomy will always be out of date and this is the case here, with some decisions having been made more than ten years ago. It is a pity that a phylogenetic tree was not produced to help the reader to understand relationships, which are not easily derived from the rather complicated text. The authors have done their best with their selection of English names, but this subject will



inevitably continue to cause controversy until the International Ornithological Congress eventually comes up with an 'agreed' world list.

Then come the 112 plates, with captions and maps opposite. Both perched and flying birds are depicted (usually between five and ten illustrations per species). Rightly or wrongly, these plates will be the test of the book's acceptability by the birding world. They are highly competent, and some are excellent, but, with over 2,000 illustrations, there is inevitably a variation in standard. While I am sure that there will be criticism of the 'woodenness' of some, especially the falcons, they appear to be accurate in terms of plumage, even though at times lacking in jizz. I found myself wanting to reorganise the illustrations on each plate to put them into a more user-friendly order. Furthermore, I do not like numbers against each picture, which refer to a numbered caption opposite. In my copy I have already started to write the name/age/sex by each picture. The publishers should really have thought about the needs of the reader more carefully.

The bulk of the book is composed of the species accounts. These cover more than just identification, dealing also with distribution, migration, food, behaviour, breeding and population. There is also a map for each species, which is a black-and-white duplication of that opposite the species' illustration on the plates. These maps are accurate and appear to have been well researched, though that for Eurasian Sparrowhawk *Accipiter nisus* incorrectly omits breeding for much of central Europe. On a personal note, I would have liked to have seen more detailed discussion of the intriguing and isolated buzzard *Buteo* population that breeds on Socotra (included here within the nominate race of Common Buzzard *B. buteo buteo*).

This is a great contribution to our ornithological armoury, but if I were a publisher embarking on a project of this magnitude, and with the wonderful gift of hindsight, I would have used a team of artists and authors to ensure its speedy and undated production. I would have made greater use of electronic editing to enable evolving issues such as taxonomy to be right up to date. And it would have been so nice to have seen 'Socotra Buzzard' as a full species; but that is another story.

Richard Porter

Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan

This summary of unchecked reports covers late September to mid October 2001.

Madeira/Cape Verde Petrel *Pterodroma madeira/feae* Flamborough Head (East Yorkshire), 23rd September. **Green Heron** *Butorides virescens* Messingham (Lincolnshire), 24th September to 2nd October. **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* Tiree (Argyll), 4th October. **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* South Uist (Western Isles), 14th-16th October. **Sociable Lapwing** *Vanellus gregarius* Rye (East Sussex), 29th September to 3rd October. **Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis* Somersham Gravel-pits (Cambridgeshire), 21st-22nd September. **White-rumped Sandpiper** *Calidris fuscicollis* Saltholme Pools (Cleveland), 29th September; Sanday (Orkney), 3rd October. **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* Findhorn Bay (Morayshire), 21st-23rd September; Samson (Scilly), 25th September. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *Tryngites subruficollis* In Ireland, singles in Co. Mayo and Co. Kerry, 16th September, and in Co. Donegal, 21st-25th September. Also Loch of Tankerness (Orkney), 22nd September; Quendale/Fleck (Shetland), 24th September to 2nd October; Farlington Marshes (Hampshire), 3rd October, possibly same Hayling Island (Hampshire), 3rd-4th October; St Mary's (Scilly), 3rd-16th October; South Uist, 6th-7th October. **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 29th September and 4th October; Out Skerries (Shetland), 30th September to 1st October. **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* Tiree, 29th September. **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* Rahasane (Co. Galway), 21st September; Welney (Norfolk), 28th September; Cantley Beet Factory (Norfolk), 6th-7th October. **Wilson's Phalarope** *Phalaropus tricolor* Coatham Marsh (Cleveland), 27th-29th September. **Grey Phalarope** *Phalaropus fulicarius* Huge influx, particularly in the southwest, with 135 past Tresco (Scilly), 1st October, and up to 100 around Scilly until at least 6th October; also many inland records. **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* Barra (Western Isles), 22nd and 29th September. **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* Gormanstown (Co. Meath), 16th September; one past Kingsbarn and Fife Ness (both Fife), 26th September. **Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus* Irvine (Ayrshire), 17th October. **Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba* Berry Head (Devon), 1st October; Cawood (North Yorkshire), 7th October; Ware (Hertfordshire), 8th October;



Steve Young/Birdwatch

316. Green Heron *Butorides virescens*, Messingham, Lincolnshire, September 2001.



George Reszeter

317. Red-necked Stint *Calidris ruficollis*, Somersham Gravel-pits, Cambridgeshire, September 2001.



Gary Bellingham

318. Juvenile Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii*, Blagdon Lake, Somerset, September 2001.



Steve Young/Birdwatch

319. Juvenile Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*, River Mersey, Merseyside, September 2001.



Keith Regan

320. Male Common Stonechat *Saxicola torquata* of one of the eastern races *maura/stejnegeri*, Snab Point, Northumberland, September 2001.

Porthgwarra (Cornwall), 17th October. **Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus* Fair Isle (Shetland), 2nd October; Porthgain (Pembrokeshire), 5th-7th October. **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* A total of 14 was reported during the period: Kergord (Shetland), 25th-27th September; Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire), 26th September; Wells Woods (Norfolk), 26th September; Spurn (East Yorkshire), 26th September; North Ronaldsay, two on 28th September, another 29th-30th September; Farne Islands (Northumberland), 28th September; Out Skerries, 29th-30th September; Corton (Suffolk), 30th September; Fair Isle, 8th October; Whalsay (Shetland), 8th October; St Agnes (Scilly), 15th-17th October; Thorntonloch (Lothian), 15th October. **Pechora Pipit** *Anthus gustavi* Tory Island (Co. Donegal), 22nd September; Fair Isle, 4th-5th October. **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* Out Skerries, 27th September. **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* Out Skerries, 27th September. **Grey Catbird** *Dumetella carolinensis* South Stack (Anglesey), 4th-6th October. **Siberian Blue Robin** *Luscinia cyane* North Ronaldsay, 2nd October. **Red-flanked Bluetail** *Tarsiger cyanurus* Cattersty Gill (Cleveland), 25th September. **Isabelline Wheatear** *Oenanthe isabellina* Landguard Common (Suffolk), 21st September. **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* St Mary's, 14th-17th October. **Grey-cheeked Thrush** *Catharus minimus* Stromness (Orkney), 14th-16th October. **Eyebrowed Thrush** *Turdus obscurus* St Kilda (Western Isles), 1st-2nd October. **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola* Blakeney Point (Norfolk), 22nd-24th September; Newbiggin (Northumberland), 29th September. **Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolata* Fair Isle, 23rd September, with a second individual there 24th-25th September; Sumburgh Head (Shet-



Mike Malpass

321. Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*, Landguard, Suffolk, September 2001.

land), 14th October. **Paddyfield Warbler** *Acrocephalus agricola* St Mary's, 13th-14th October. **Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum* Foula (Shetland), 22nd September to 1st October; Fair Isle, 24th September; North Ronaldsay, 25th-26th September; Hoswick (Shetland), 27th September; Fife Ness, 28th September; Bardsey (Gwynedd), 13th October. **Booted Warbler** *Hippolais caligata* Hoswiek, 24th September. **Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* Toe Head (Co. Cork), 12th-14th October. **Sardinian Warbler** *Sylvia melanocephala* Brean Down (Somerset), 13th-17th October. **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* Unst (Shetland), 22nd September. **Pallas's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus proregulus* Whalsay, 7th October. **Radde's Warbler** *Phylloscopus schwarzi* At least 11 were seen: Fair Isle, 23rd September; Sandwick (Shetland), 24th September; Portland (Dorset), 24th September; Blakeney Point, 25th September; Foula, 25th-26th September; Happisburgh (Norfolk), 26th September; Spurn, 26th-27th September; South Gare (Cleveland), 27th-28th September; Isle of May (Fife), 28th September; Grutness (Shetland), 14th



Dave Nye

322 & 323. Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola*, Blakeney Point, Norfolk, September 2001.



George Reszeter



Hugh Harrop

324. Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica*, Fair Isle, Shetland, October 2001.

October; Kergord, 14th October. **Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* No fewer than 18 were reported: Kelling Quags (Norfolk), 22nd September; Sea Palling (Norfolk), 22nd September; Fair Isle, 24th September to 4th October; Reculver (Kent), 25th-26th September; Donna Nook (Lincolnshire), 25th-26th September; Cattersty Gill, 25th-26th September; Great Yarmouth (Norfolk), 25th September; Waxham (Norfolk), 26th-27th September; Dungeness (Kent), 29th September to 3rd October; Ramsey (Isle of Man), 29th September; Aldebrough (East Yorkshire), 10th-12th October; Sizewell (Suffolk), 13th October; Bryher (Scilly), 13th-14th October; Southwold (Suffolk), 14th-15th October; Portland, 14th October; The Naze (Essex), 14th October; Robin Hood's Bay (North Yorkshire), 14th October; Winterton (Norfolk), 16th October. **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* Dungeness, 29th September to 5th October. **Woodchat Shrike** *Lanius senator* Unst, 25th September. **Red-eyed Vireo** *Vireo olivaceus* South Stack, 4th October; Porthgwarra, 7th-14th October, with two there on 13th. **Arctic Redpoll** *Carduelis hornemanni* Co. Mayo, 15th September; Co. Donegal, 18th September; North Ronaldsay, 21st-22nd September and 7th October; Islay (Argyll), 22nd-24th September; West Yell (Shetland), 1st October; Westray (Orkney), 7th October. **Yellow-rumped Warbler** *Dendroica coronata* Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 3rd-7th October; Blasket Islands (Co. Kerry), 4th-5th October. **Blackpoll Warbler** *Dendroica striata* St Agnes, 1st October. **Black-faced Bunting** *Emberiza spodocephala* Lundy (Devon), 12th October. **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* Out Skerries, 22nd September; Winterton, 24th September; Bempton (East Yorkshire), 25th September; Foula, 27th September; Fair Isle, 28th September to 2nd October, with two there on the last date, and another on 4th-6th October; Fetlar (Shetland), 30th September to 1st October. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola* St Agnes, 5th-7th October. **Black-headed Bunting** *Emberiza melanocephala* Fair Isle, two from mid-month to 23rd September; one to 25th September. **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** *Pheucticus ludovicianus* Lundy, 6th-9th October; St Martin's (Scilly), 13th-14th October. **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* Prawle Point (Devon), 9th-15th October. **Baltimore Oriole** *Icterus galbula* Baltimore (Co. Cork), 7th-12th October.



Iain H. Leach

325. Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*, Filey, North Yorkshire, September 2001.

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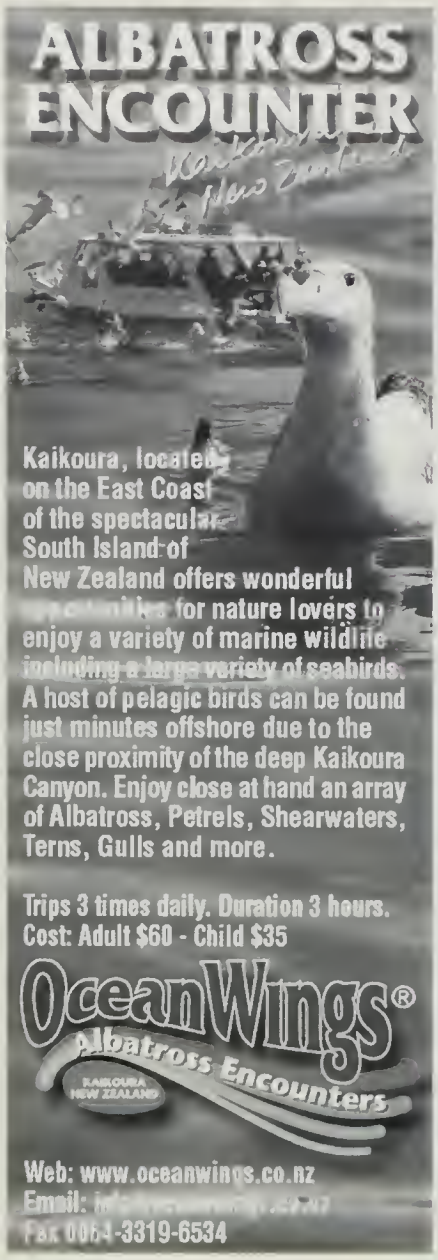
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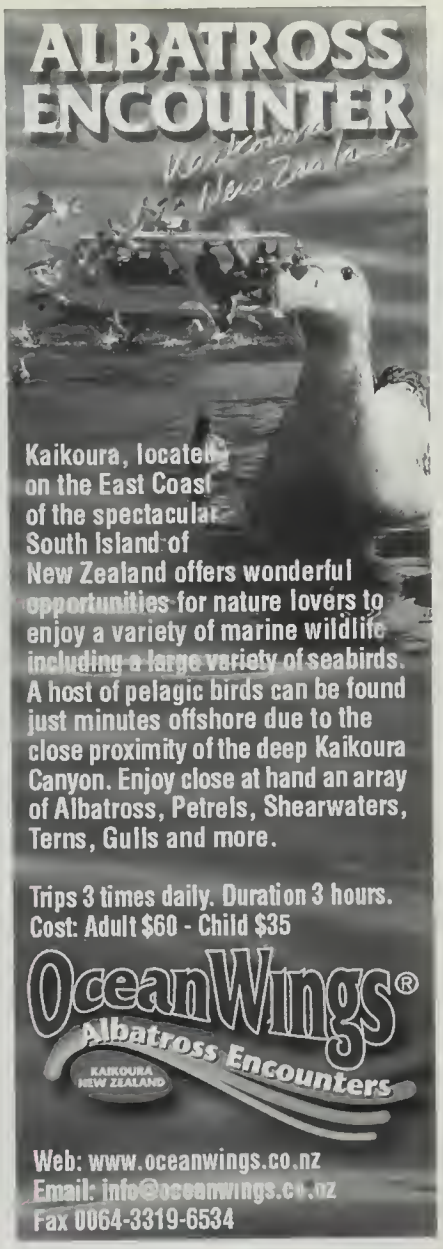
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Report on scarce migrant birds in Britain in 1999

Peter A. Fraser and Michael J. Rogers



Dan Powell

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

ABSTRACT For this fifth annual report, covering 1999, information on accepted records of scarce migrants was supplied by County and Regional Bird Recorders, sometimes in advance of publication in their local bird reports.

The year 1999 was, by and large, a disappointing one, especially for passerine migrants. It was, however, an excellent year for Nearctic ducks, with record totals of **Green-winged Teals** *Anas carolinensis* and **Surf Scoters** *Melanitta perspicillata*, and good numbers of **Ring-necked Ducks** *Aythya collaris*. **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* were also reported in record numbers. Others which fared well included **Cory's Shearwater** *Calonectris diomedea*, **Purple Heron** *Ardea purpurea* and **Pectoral Sandpiper** *Calidris melanotos*, all of which reached their second-highest annual totals ever, while **European Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster*, **Short-toed Larks** *Calandrella brachydactyla* and **Common Cranes** *Grus grus* were recorded in above-average numbers. Conversely, it was the poorest year on record for **Tawny Pipits** *Anthus campestris*, while other species in short supply included **Kentish Plover** *Charadrius alexandrinus*, **Hoopoe** *Upupa epops*, **Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla*, **Bluethroat** *Luscinia svecica*, **Melodious Warbler** *Hippolais polyglotta*, **Red-breasted Flycatcher** *Ficedula parva* and **Red-backed Shrike** *Lanius collurio*.

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10 DEC 2001

This is the fifth annual report on scarce migrant birds in Britain. It follows a similar format to the fourth report (*Brit. Birds* 93: 588-641), but contains three fewer species. Records of both Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* and Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* from 1st January 1999 have been considered by the BBRC and published in the Committee's annual report (*Brit. Birds* 93: 512-567). Records of Ruddy Shelduck *Tadorna ferruginea* have been omitted this year, because the data received are simply too incomplete to permit a national analysis. The format of the present report has been revised, compared with those for previous years. The species' texts present a more concise summary of information and patterns of occurrence, while a more analytical approach has been adopted with certain key species. Additional data for each species may be obtained from the BBRC website, via the 'Scarce Migrants' section, at http://www.bbrc.org.uk

Only those records which have been assessed and fully accepted by the appropriate local, regional or national record panels have been included in this report. Each year, the accumulating of data, including the record-assessment process, takes much longer for some counties than for others. As a result, and despite the willing and enthusiastic co-operation of nearly all of Britain's county bird-recorders and their assistants, these national reports on scarce migrant birds inevitably have to be published well after the year to which they refer. Even then, most or all records from a few counties and sub-counties are not included. Current gaps in the source material for the scarce-migrants database are highlighted on the website, and recorders are strongly encouraged to send data for 1999, and for previous years, if they have not already done so.

Statistics for previous years have been updated as they have become available, even if this was after the publication of the report in question. In addition, the inclusion this year, for the first time, of records previously classified as 'at sea' but within the 200-mile British economic zone has also resulted in some statistics being revised upwards. This policy is in line with that of the BBRC (see *Brit. Birds* 94: 452-453).

As before, this report covers England, Scotland, Wales and the Isle of Man. In future reports, we should very much like to include records for the whole of Ireland, as well as for the whole of Britain, which would enable a comprehensive study to be made of the pattern of records in the entire geographical area of Britain & Ireland. At the time of writing, all Irish records up to and including those for 1997 have been entered into the database, and it would be a relatively simple task thus to extend the scope of the report, which remains our objective.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank most sincerely the county and regional recorders and their assistants for providing such detailed information for 1999 and for supplying additional records for past years where relevant. Without their ready co-operation, this report would not have been possible.

Systematic list

For interpretation of the statistics used and quoted in the species accounts, the following points should be taken into consideration:

- In recent decades, the increased numbers of field observers and their collective enhanced knowledge, improved mobility and greater amount of time spent in the field must, in some part, be responsible for the increase in recorded numbers of some scarce migrants.
- Known breeding individuals (e.g. Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*) have been excluded.
- Individuals remaining from one year to the next (e.g. overwintering Surf Scoters *Melanitta perspicillata*) have been counted only in their year of arrival.
- Returning individuals (e.g. Ring-billed Gulls *Larus delawarensis*) have been counted only in their year of arrival, unless stated otherwise.
- Known escapes from captivity (e.g. some White Storks *Ciconia ciconia*) have been excluded.
- Statistics for some species for 1999 and, to a lesser degree, for earlier years are incomplete because of the unavailability of data from some counties.

Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1958-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-1999			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1998	1999	1980	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
3,373	19,809	2	5,116	3,373	2,851	14	18	453	1,493

An estimated 3,373 Cory's Shearwaters were seen in Britain in 1999. The vast majority of these were in southwest England, with 1,878 in Scilly and 1,411 in Cornwall. There were also 14 in Pembrokeshire, nine in Devon, seven in East Yorkshire, three in Northeast Scotland, two in Dorset, Durham, Suffolk, Sussex and North Yorkshire, and singles in Anglesey, Ayrshire, Fife, Flint, Norfolk and Northumberland. A further 35 were seen during pelagic trips and from ferries in British waters. Duplication of records almost certainly occurs in Cornwall and Scilly, and in the sea area between the two, but to what extent it is unknown. Some duplication is assumed to have occurred also in Northumberland and East Yorkshire. It is conceivable that the true number of individuals involved in any given year is substantially lower than reported here, but the annual totals given do, nonetheless, allow a fair comparison to be made between years.

The peak months for sightings were June (334), July (234), August (953) and September (1,848). Daily records were, unfortunately, not available from Scilly, but records peaked in mid-September in 1999, somewhat later than in recent years. A total of 358 was seen at Porthgwarra, Cornwall, on 17th September and 518 were reported from Scilly during the third week of September.

There were three records in April, at Chapel Point, Cornwall, and on St Agnes, Scilly, on 20th and at Porthgwarra on 25th. Hitherto, there had been only one April record during the 1990s. One at Strumble Head, Pembrokeshire, on 29th November was the third-latest individual on record. The extended season in 1999 may well be associated with the large numbers of Basking Sharks *Cetorhinus maximus* reported, which suggest an increase in sea temperatures (and associated feeding opportunities) around southwest England.

The year 1999 was the second-best one for Cory's Shearwaters since national record collation began, in 1958. In only seven of those years have more than 1,000 individuals been recorded, but four of these have been since 1993. Cory's Shearwater is by far the commonest species to appear in this report. Nevertheless, we shall continue to include it, since there are still relatively few records per year, although some of these involve large numbers of individuals. This species it still very rare away from the traditional seawatching locations in southwest Britain. In Scotland, there have been just 198 records, no fewer than 83 of which were seen from Fair Isle, Shetland, in 1965; of the remaining 115, half (58) have been seen during the 1990s.

Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus*

Around 850 Balearic Shearwaters were recorded in Britain in 1999. Even an approximate analysis of records is becoming very difficult for this species, since it is impossible to know whether those seen from certain sites over a period of days involve the same or different individuals. The figure of 850 represents 'bird-days' and is almost certainly an overestimate of the number of individuals which occurred in British waters. Nevertheless, it seems that fewer were seen in 1999 than in 1998.

About 600 were recorded in Cornwall, 100 in Devon and 67 in Scilly. Away from these traditional areas, up to 20 were seen in Sussex, mostly in August and September, but there were sightings at Brighton on 28th June (two) and 21st December. One was also seen from Ventnor, Isle of Wight, on 3rd June, with a further ten from that site during September. Five were seen from the Calf of Man, Isle of Man, including two on 3rd July, while in western Scotland ten autumn records in Ayrshire included five on 2nd November. Around 20 were seen from two sites in Argyll (Frenchman's Rocks, Islay, and Machrihanish, Kintyre), while four were seen from the Outer Hebrides in early September.

In Northeast Scotland, where this species has been recorded annually since 1994, there was just one record in 1999, at Peterhead on 21st August. One in Fife was the only other record

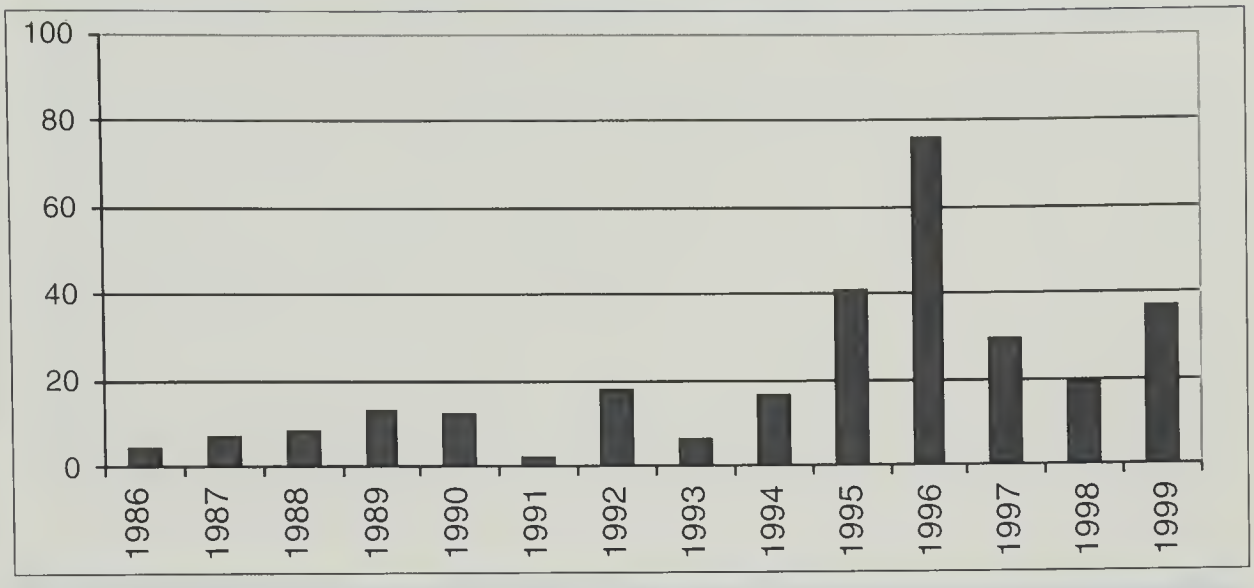


Fig. 1. Annual totals of Balearic Shearwaters *Puffinus mauretanicus* in Scotland, 1986-99.

received from the Scottish east coast. The increasing number of records of Balearic Shearwaters in Scotland is illustrated in fig. 1. Farther south, seven were seen in Northumberland, including one off the Farne Islands on 29th April. Completing the picture for the east coast, one was reported in Cleveland, six in North Yorkshire, 38 in East Yorkshire (mostly from Flamborough Head) and 11 in Norfolk.

Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1958-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-1999			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1987	1999	1970	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
29	686	2	35	29	28	7	19	21	20

Of the 29 Purple Herons recorded in Britain in 1999, six were in Kent, four in Norfolk, three in Devon and Hampshire, two in Scilly and Wiltshire, and singles in Borders, Cornwall, Dorset, Greater London, Greater Manchester, Isle of Man, Lincolnshire, Suffolk and Sussex. This total makes 1999 the second-best year on record for this species.

After two early sightings, both at Sandwich Bay, Kent, on 29th March and 9th April, an influx occurred in the last week of April, with five appearing during 25th-26th and another on 28th. There were ten arrivals in May, with another two in June. One at Meggett Reservoir, Borders, on 28th June, was only the sixteenth record for Scotland.

One in Sussex was the only record in July, but more arrived in autumn than in any other since 1958. These comprised three in August and five in September, including the first for the Isle of Man, on the Calf of Man on 19th September. The last record was of a juvenile at Beddington Sewage-farm, Greater London, on 22nd September.

White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1958-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-1999			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1998	1986	1977	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
27	544	6	55	48	39	2	16	15	21

The number of White Storks recorded in 1999, 27, may well be an overestimate, since it is extremely difficult to assess both the movement of individuals between counties and the problem of escaped birds. For example, one was known to have moved from Wiltshire to Hamp-

shire on 5th September, while another was assumed to have moved between Angus and Perth on 1st October. It is also quite possible that a series of records in the East Midlands from mid-April onwards may be attributable to just one individual. Those arriving in 1999 were widely scattered throughout Britain, with the following county breakdown listing those assumed to have been seen for the first time: three in the Isle of Wight, two in Borders, Dorset, Kent, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Nottinghamshire and North Yorkshire, and singles first seen in another ten counties.

Four March arrivals were widely spread across the country, from two on the Isle of Wight (17th and 28th) to one at Roxburgh, Borders, on 30th. Migrants continued to arrive during early April, with another seven in the first half of that month, followed by three in the second half of April and another three during May, including a mobile individual in Nottinghamshire. Following two in June, and singles in July and August, a minor influx, of six individuals, occurred in September; five of these were in southern England, but one also appeared in Scotland, at Lumsdaine, Borders, on 29th. This individual was the last of the year, being seen in the Perth area on 1st-14th October.



Hugh Harrop

326. White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, Unst, Shetland, May 1995.

Eurasian Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*

Eurasian Spoonbills were recorded from only 24 counties and recording areas in 1999, compared with 43 in 1998. Once again, the movement of spoonbills within Britain, especially in East Anglia, precludes a detailed analysis, but it seems likely that between 50 and 100 individuals were involved.

Records of this species in Scotland remain of considerably rarity, and details of four were received in 1999: an adult at Montrose, Northeast Scotland, on 15th-16th May; an adult at Vane Farm, Fife, on 11th-13th June, with a first-year there from 21st June until 2nd September; and another first-year (possibly the individual from Vane Farm) at Raith Reservoir, Ayrshire, on 10th September.

Elsewhere, the largest flock of the year was of 15 at Orfordness, Suffolk, on 29th August. More unexpectedly, there was one at Barn Elms, Greater London, which appeared briefly on 13th May,

flying in from the east and departing to the west.

Eurasian Spoonbills are still rarer in Britain than many other species considered in this report and we are, therefore, keen to continue maintaining records of its occurrence, despite the difficulties of analysis.

Green-winged Teal *Anas carolinensis*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1958-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-1999			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1999	1995	1996	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
42	428	1	42	30	30	2	6	12	22

Of approximately 49 Green-winged Teals recorded in Britain in 1999, a minimum of seven have been assumed to have remained or returned from previous years. It is quite likely, although impossible to determine with certainty, that there were fewer than 42 new arrivals in 1999. Several individuals of this species are exceptionally site-faithful, and have returned to favoured sites for many years running; there is no reason to suppose that those reported from new sites are returning birds, but it is possible that some of them are.

Reports came from 17 counties or recording areas, but those in Lancashire, Northeast Scotland, Northumberland and Shetland were assumed to have involved returning individuals. Norfolk and Scilly had the highest number of new arrivals, with six each.

An unprecedented autumn arrival of Green-winged Teals, almost three times as many as in any previous autumn, made 1999 by far the best year for the species since national record collation began, in 1958 (figs. 2 & 3). Fig. 3 shows a concentrated arrival in southwest England of 14 new individuals, including six in Scilly. There were seven new arrivals in Scotland, widely scattered across four recording areas, and two in Norfolk.

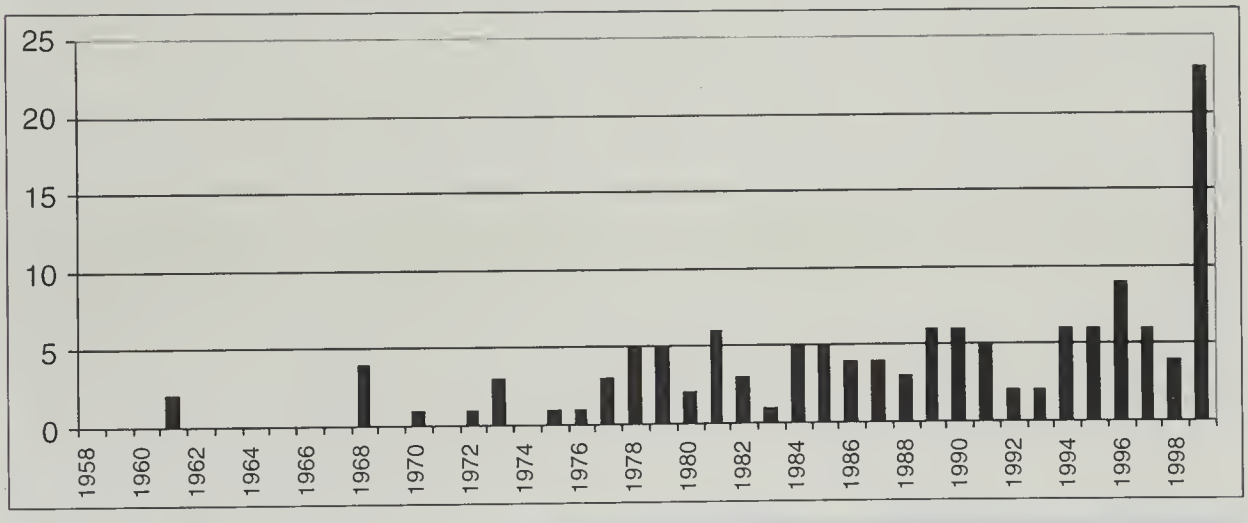


Fig. 2. (Above) Numbers of presumed newly arrived Green-winged Teals *Anas carolinensis* in Britain in autumn (September-December), 1958-99.

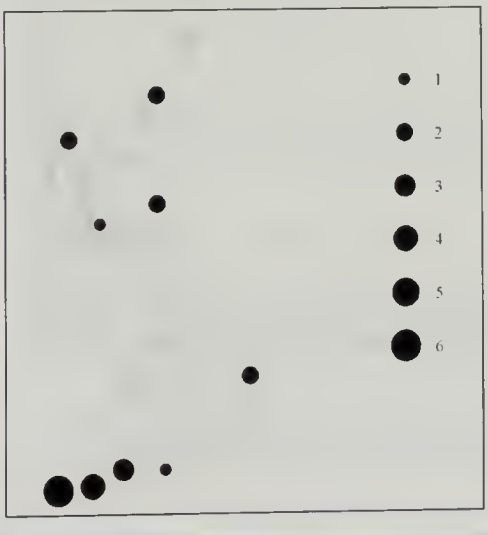


Fig. 3. Distribution of presumed newly arrived Green-winged Teals *Anas carolinensis* in each county in Britain during September-December 1999. Note the concentration in southwest England and a scatter in Scotland.

Ring-necked Duck *Aythya collaris*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1958-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-1999			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1980	1979	1999	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
24	342	3	28	26	24	1	8	13	13

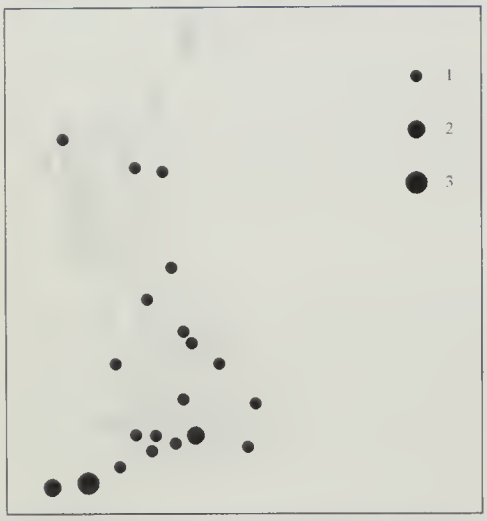


Fig. 4. Distribution of presumed newly arrived Ring-necked Ducks *Aythya collaris* in Britain in 1999.

Of approximately 28 Ring-necked Ducks recorded in Britain in 1999, a minimum of four were assumed to have been first recorded in a previous year. The 24 new arrivals in 1999 make this the third-best year for the species in Britain since 1958.

There were reports from no fewer than 22 counties or recording areas, although those in Hampshire and North Yorkshire were assumed to be returning individuals. Three new birds were seen in Cornwall, two in both Berkshire and Scilly, and one in the remaining 17 areas. The widespread distribution in 1999 (fig. 4) contrasts markedly with that in 1998 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 596). Typically, new arrivals were discovered throughout the year (in every month except July), with a slight peak in spring, when six were found between 26th April and 16th May.

Surf Scoter *Melanitta perspicillata*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1958-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-1999			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1999	1989	1997	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
25	332	1	25	24	22	2	5	11	15

Of approximately 31 Surf Scoters seen in Britain in 1999, a minimum of six are assumed to have been individuals which first arrived in a previous year. The 25 new arrivals in 1999 make this the best year on record for the species in Britain. There can be little doubt that a surge in records will occur in subsequent years, since 16 of the new arrivals were aged as first-years. This dramatic increase is shown in fig. 5.

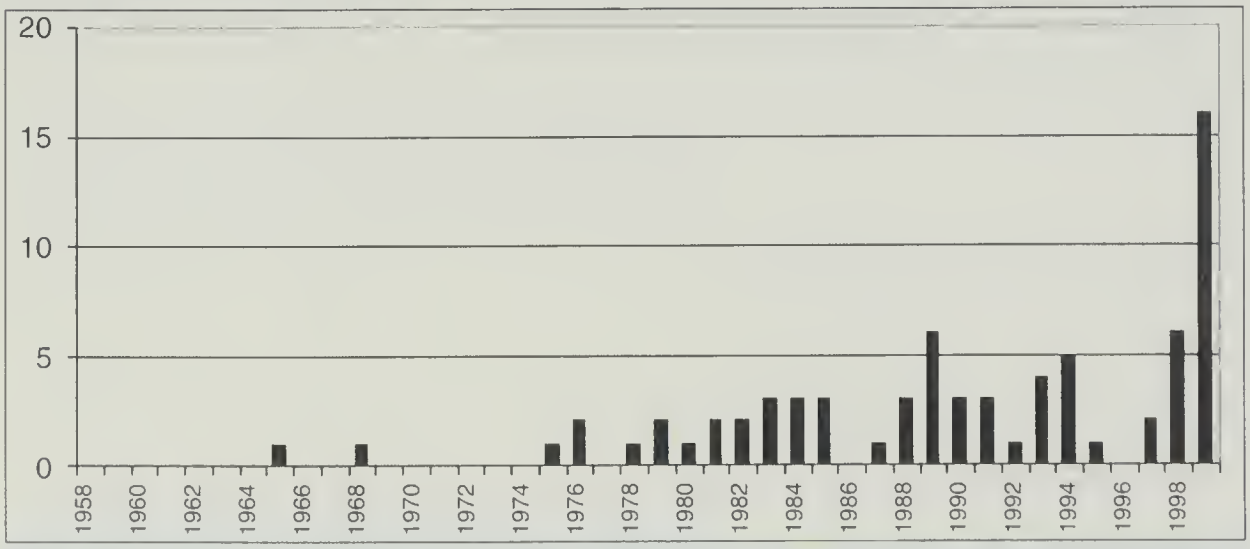


Fig. 5. Numbers of presumed newly arrived first-year Surf Scoters *Melanitta perspicillata* in Britain, 1958-99. Note the peak numbers in 1999.

Sightings were reported from 13 areas, including Angus & Dundee, Moray & Nairn and Pembrokeshire, where only returning birds were seen. At least four adults were present in Fife during the early part of the year, plus an additional new immature, while up to four new birds were seen in Argyll and up to three adults were present in Moray & Nairn. Away from the Scottish strongholds, there were several records from southern England, including four in Devon, two in Sussex and singles in Scilly, Dorset, Hampshire and Kent. The discovery of new individuals in 1999 was protracted: of the 16 first-years, 12 were located in the first half of the year, but no more than three were found in any one month.

European Honey-buzzard *Pernis apivorus*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1986-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-1999			Annual means 1986-1999	
			1993	1998	1995	1986-89	1990-99
116	1,387	5	167	166	151	60	115

By recent standards, the total of 116 migrant European Honey-buzzards seen in 1999 represents an average year. Of these, 50 were seen in spring (May-June), which is slightly above the seasonal mean of 45 for the 1990s, ten in July, and 56 in autumn (August-October), which falls just below the mean of 59 for the same decade.

Records came from 32 recording areas in 1999, including 16 in Norfolk, nine in Dorset, eight in Devon, Suffolk and the Isle of Wight, and seven in Surrey. Five in Scotland included one on the west coast, where this species is very scarce, at Ledaig, Argyll, on 7th August.

The first spring record was at Hickling, Norfolk, on 3rd May, and passage peaked in the last third of that month, with 16 sightings. Return passage peaked in the last third of August, when 17 individuals were logged, while five were recorded in October, the last in Buckinghamshire on 11th. The distribution of records at these two seasons is shown in fig. 6.

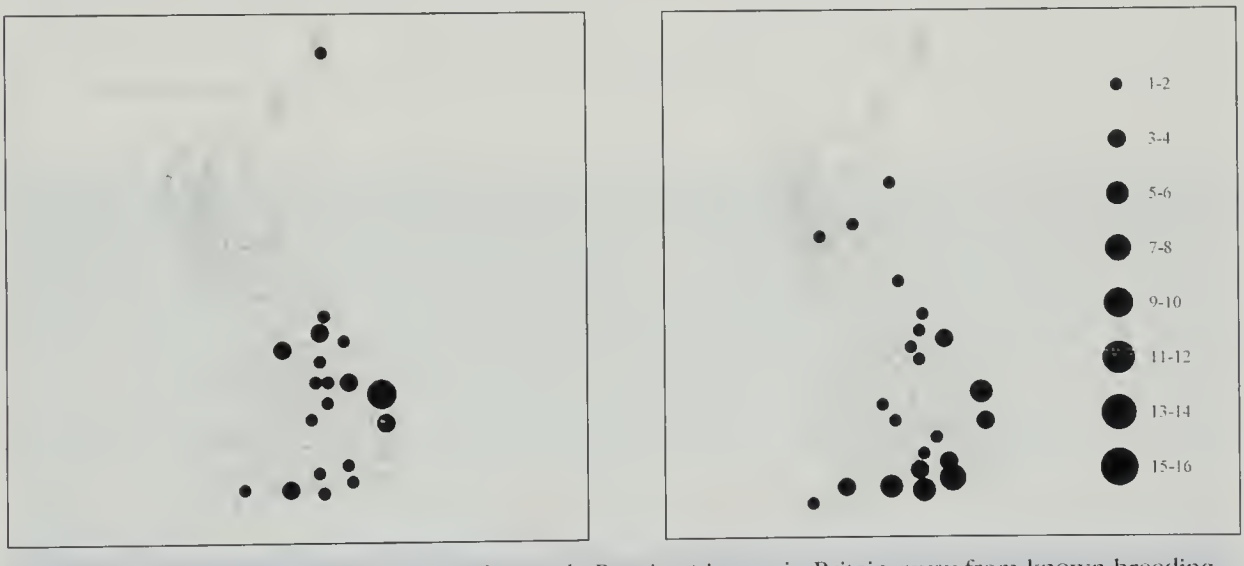


Fig. 6. Distribution of European Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* in Britain, away from known breeding sites, in 1999: left, spring (May-June); right, autumn (August-October). Note the easterly bias in spring, and the concentration along the south coast in autumn.

Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1974-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1974-1999			Annual means 1974-1999	
			1994	1998	1988	1980-89	1990-99
67	1,041	5	235	110	85	28	70

There were 67 Rough-legged Buzzards seen in Britain in 1999, which, although slightly below

the average for the 1990s, is still the fifth-best annual total since 1974. Furthermore, the 43 new individuals recorded in the first half of the year made the winter of 1998/99 the second-best on record during the past 25 years (fig. 7).

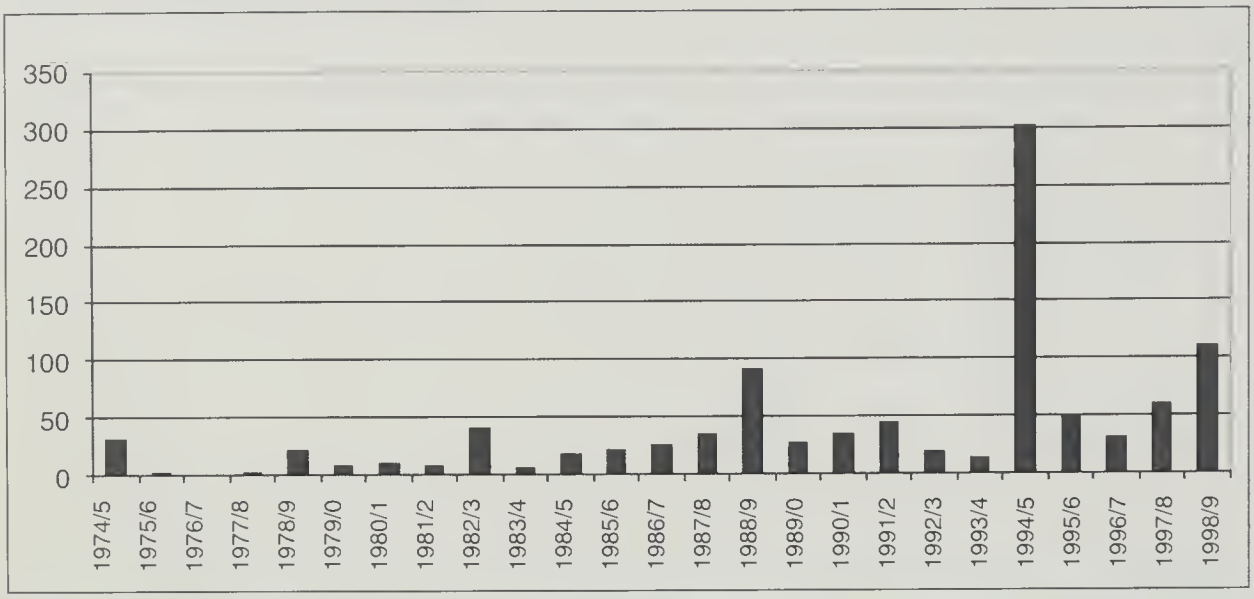


Fig. 7. Numbers of presumed newly arrived Rough-legged Buzzards *Buteo lagopus* in Britain in each winter from 1974/75 to 1998/99.

Geographically, the distribution of the species was, typically, biased towards the English east coast. There were approximately 31 records in Norfolk, six in Suffolk, five in East Yorkshire and four in North Yorkshire. Records came also from ten other English counties, with two in Orkney and two in Wales, at Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, on 18th October and at Trichrug, Ceredigion, on 14th December.

The arrival dates in the early part of the year were well spread, though with a peak of 12 in April. One at Morston, Norfolk, on 10th May was the latest spring record this year. The first autumn record was also in Norfolk, at Felbrigg, on 3rd October, followed by another 23 before the end of the year.



C. Doorney/Windrush

327. Rough-legged Buzzard *Buteo lagopus*, Essex, date unknown.

Spotted Crake *Porzana porzana*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1986-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-1999			Annual means 1986-1999	
			1995	1989	1988	1986-89	1990-99
64	863	7	117	82	81	71	58

With this species, there is inevitably some overlap between the records considered here and those published in the Report on rare breeding birds (*Brit. Birds* 94: 344-381), but we have endeavoured to include only migrants in the present analysis. Statistically, 1999 was an average, or slightly below-average, year for Spotted Crakes in Britain. With 64 individuals reported, it was the seventh-best year of the 14 since collation of records of this species began, in 1986. Thirteen were seen in spring (compared with a mean of 22 since 1986), four in midsummer (in July), and 45 were reported in autumn (compared with a mean of 59 during the same period).

Records were received from 32 recording areas, although the English south-coast counties dominated: for example, nine were seen in Cornwall, six in Hampshire and four in both Dorset and Scilly. There were also nine in Scotland, mostly on the islands but including one at Skinflats, Forth, on 3rd September, and three in Wales.

Two notably unseasonal records involved singles at Trevorrian, Cornwall, on 12th February and at Low Barns, Durham, on 28th December. Otherwise, a protracted autumn passage began with a pulse of ten in three days during 6th-8th August, and culminated with three at Cargreen, Cornwall, on 2nd November.

Common Crane *Grus grus*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1958-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-1999			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1963	1982	1985	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
86	1,880	4	685	199	103	64	19	56	37

Excluding the small resident population of Common Cranes in Norfolk, 86 individuals were seen in Britain in 1999, the fourth-best year for this species since 1958. It is always extremely difficult to gauge correctly the number of individuals that occur each year, and we acknowledge that the figure presented here may well be an overestimate. During the spring, there were several records of two adults together in eastern England and Scotland, and it may be the case that most such records relate to just two or three mobile pairs. In general, however, little movement between counties has been assumed. One pair was believed to have visited both Lincolnshire and Yorkshire in March, while an individual moved from Cornwall to Devon, and possibly Somerset, in October-November.

Records of Common Cranes were received from 21 counties and recording areas, with most (25) found in Norfolk. There were also 13 in Lincolnshire, six in East Yorkshire and five in both Suffolk and South Yorkshire. Most occurred in spring, when 52 were seen, which represents the best spring migration on record, and consolidates a recent trend of increasing numbers at this season; indeed, the best three springs have all been between 1996 and 1999. The first record in 1999 was at Cley, Norfolk, on 4th March, and a further 13 arrived

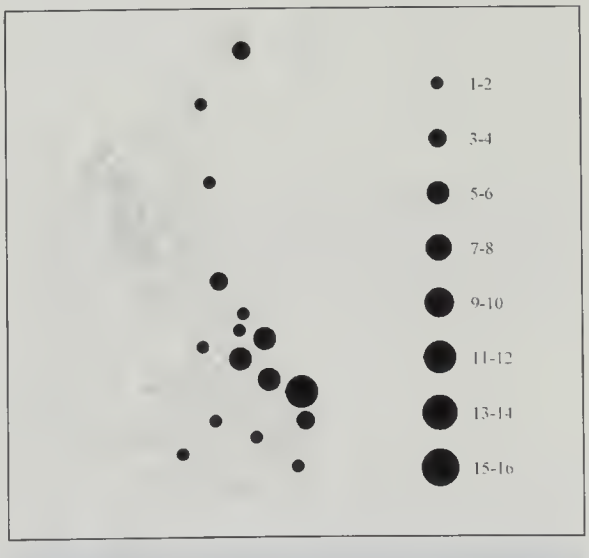


Fig. 8. Distribution of Common Cranes *Grus grus* in Britain in spring 1999. Note the concentration in eastern Britain.

in that month, with six during 12th-14th. Another 17 appeared during April, and 22 in May. Two main arrival peaks involved eleven between 28th April and 5th May and ten during 13th-15th May. The predominantly easterly distribution of this arrival is shown clearly in fig. 8.

The autumn total of 28 was also better than average, and ranks as the sixth-best ever. The first was at Mertoun, Borders, on 5th September, with subsequent records until 15th December, when two were seen at St David's, Pembrokeshire. There was no clear peak in autumn sightings, but a flock of seven at Sutterton, Lincolnshire, on 21st September is noteworthy.

Kentish Plover *Charadrius alexandrinus*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1986-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-1999			Annual means 1986-1999	
			1993	1991	1996	1986-89	1990-99
16	449	14	59	42	39	28	34

Only 16 Kentish Plovers were seen in Britain in 1999, the lowest annual total for this species since national record collation began, in 1986. Norfolk, where three occurred, was the only county north of the south coast of England to record this species. There were four in both Devon and Sussex, with three in Hampshire and two in Cornwall. Kentish Plovers are extremely rare in the north of Britain; for example, there have been only two records in Scotland since 1986 (at Brora, Highland, in 1994 and at Tyninghame, Lothian, in 1998).

Twelve of the 16 were seen in spring, with the first at Cley, Norfolk, on 21st April. Following this, six were seen during 25th-30th April, including four on Pilsey Sands, Sussex, an arrival which coincided with the build-up to the full-moon spring tide. After a mid-summer record at Titchfield Haven, Hampshire, on 3rd July, just three were reported in autumn, the last of these at Hayle, Cornwall, on 20th October.

Temminck's Stint *Calidris temminckii*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1968-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-1999			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1987	1977	1989	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
94	2,793	13	176	125	119	71	105	90

In 1999, slightly above-average numbers of Temminck's Stints were reported, in both spring and autumn. A total of 94 was seen, 59 of these in spring and 35 in autumn (compared with the respective seasonal means of 55 and 32).

Reports were received from 24 recording areas, in six of which this species was seen in both

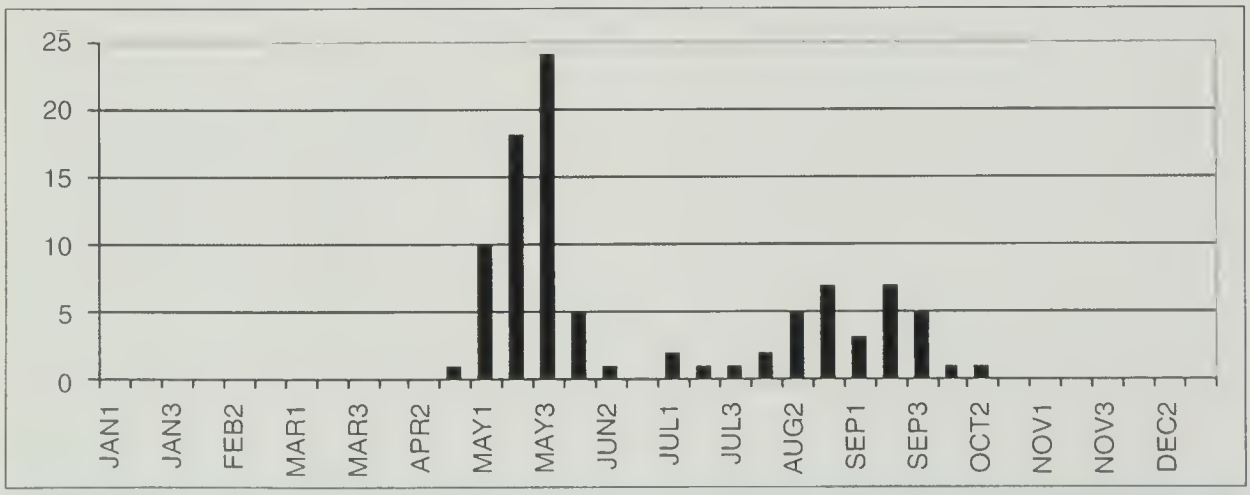


Fig. 9. Numbers of Temminck's Stints *Calidris temminckii* in Britain in 1999. Note the short spring passage, and the longer, less intense autumn one.

spring and autumn. More than one-third of all records were in Norfolk, where there were 16 in spring and 20 in autumn. Other favoured areas included Cleveland (three in spring, seven in autumn), Hampshire (one and two, respectively), Leicestershire (one and four, respectively) and Northumberland (five and one, respectively). As suggested by these statistics, the vast majority were in eastern Britain. In the west, three were seen in Lancashire and singles in Warwickshire and Worcestershire in spring, while singles in Dorset and Gwent were the only autumn records away from the east side.

The protracted autumn passage was in marked contrast to the brief, intense spring movement (fig. 9). Following the first record, at Berney Marshes, Norfolk, on 28th April, numbers increased rapidly, with a peak of 24 in the last third of May; seven individuals arrived on 20th May alone. The bulk of autumn migrants occurred between 15th August and 15th September, but with two late records in October: at Breydon, Norfolk, on 1st-3rd, and at Titchfield Haven, and other sites in Hampshire, during 15th-25th.

Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1968-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-1999			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1984	1999	1983	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
122	1,730	2	131	122	89	40	70	56

No fewer than 122 Pectoral Sandpipers were recorded in Britain in 1999, the second-best year since national record collation began, in 1968.

The species was much more widely distributed than in 1998, when most were seen in the southeast; in 1999, Pectoral Sandpipers were reported from 31 counties or recording areas. In particular, large numbers were found in the north and west: a total of 32 in Scotland included a remarkable 11 in Shetland and seven in Northeast Scotland, and in the west there were 12 in Cornwall and 11 in the old county of Lancashire (including four in the Greater Manchester recording area). Nevertheless, East Anglia still fared best, with up to 20 in Norfolk and eight in Suffolk.

There were just six in spring, between 9th May (Cemlyn Bay, Anglesey) and 2nd June (Cley, Norfolk). In autumn, following ten in July and 15 in August, a major influx was observed during the first three weeks of September, with an arrival of 66 individuals. Twelve were found on 12th September alone, spread from Cornwall and Sussex to the Outer Hebrides and Northeast Scotland. Daily arrivals continued until 29th September, but only 12 were found in October, while the last one was seen at Albemarle Barracks, Northumberland, on 11th November.

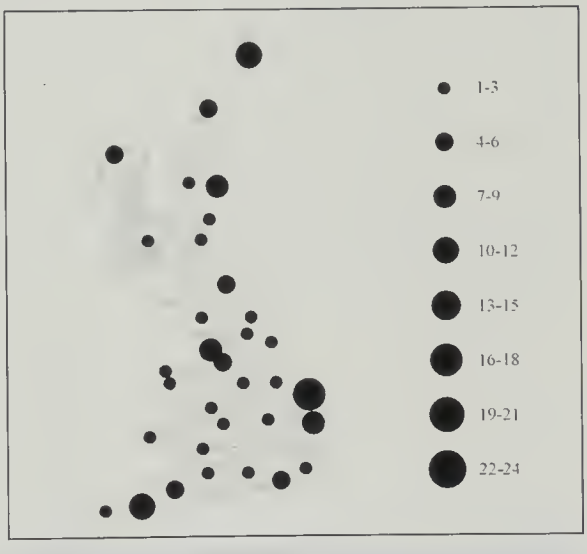


Fig. 10. Distribution of Pectoral Sandpipers *Calidris melanotos* in Britain in 1999. The species was widely scattered, with concentrations in Scotland, the West Country and East Anglia.

Buff-breasted Sandpiper *Tryngites subruficollis*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1958-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-1999			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1977	1975	1996	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
9	565	26	54	48	34	3	21	19	15

The year 1999 was yet another poor one for Buff-breasted Sandpipers, with only nine recorded. With the exception of 1996, numbers have been low throughout the 1990s, and the species is now close to being a rarity, an official status which it last held in 1982.

Records were received from eight counties: Argyll, Cornwall, Kent, Norfolk, Northumberland, Outer Hebrides, Scilly (two) and Suffolk. All but one were in September, the first being at Loch Gruinart, Islay, Argyll, on 5th. Four were discovered on 15th-16th September, singles at Elmley, Kent, and at Berney Marshes, Norfolk, and two in Scilly. The last of the year frequented one of its favourite British habitats, a Cornish golf course, at Cape Cornwall, on 1st October.

Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1986-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-1999			Annual means 1986-1999	
			1999	1989	1992	1986-89	1990-99
62	470	1	62	44	40	36	30

With no fewer than 62 individuals reported, 1999 was, by some margin, the best year for migrant Red-necked Phalaropes in Britain since national record collation began, in 1986. Spring passage, in particular, was exceptional, with a total of 29 seen. Of these, 24 were in Scotland, most of them on Orkney and the Outer Hebrides, with others reported from Cumbria, Northeast Scotland, Norfolk, North Yorkshire, Suffolk and Worcestershire. The first was not recorded until 22nd May, on Papa Westray, Orkney, but there were a further 24 between then and the month's end, with another four in June.

Following two in mid-July, autumn numbers also broke the previous record for that season, with a further 31 sightings. Autumn passage was much more protracted (fig. 11). After five in early and mid-August, including two on 11th and two on 17th, peak numbers occurred in late August; of 13 during the last ten days of the month, eight appeared during 20th-23rd. Nine were recorded in September, three in October, and a straggler in November, at East Ruston, Norfolk, from 7th to 14th. Most records were of single birds, but two juveniles were seen at Blagdon Lake, Avon, on 25th-26th August, while two were at Dungeness, Kent, on 30th September. A welcome reversal of fortune for this delightful wader.

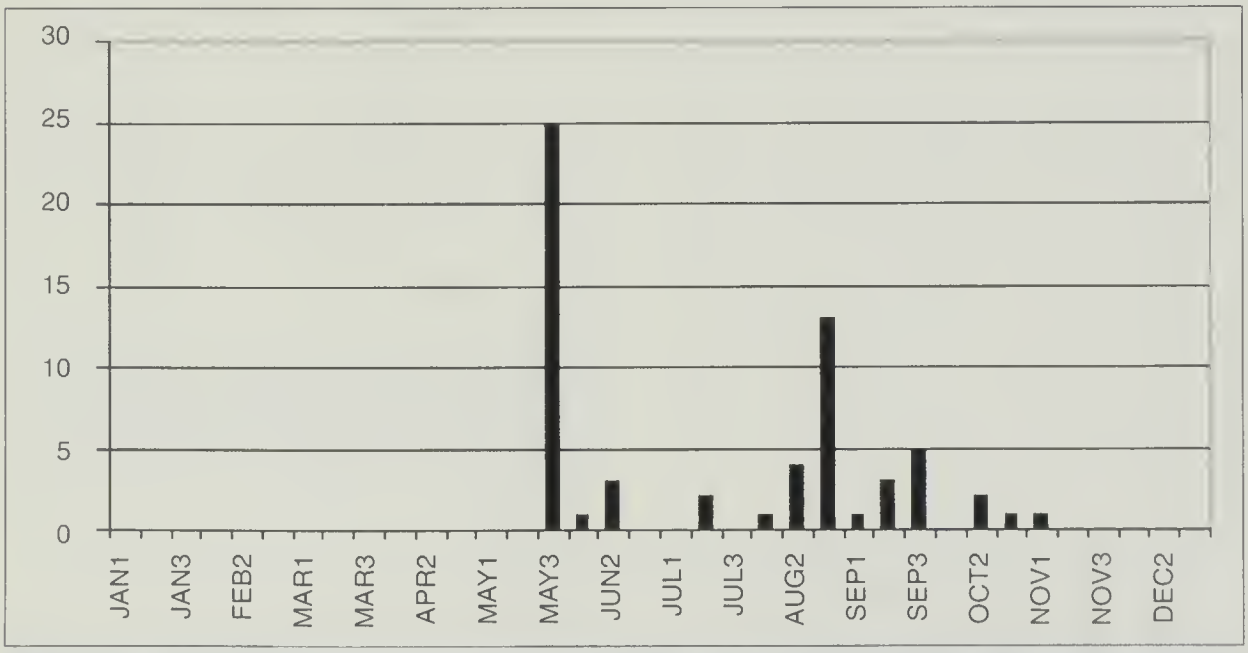


Fig. 11. Numbers of Red-necked Phalaropes *Phalaropus lobatus* in Britain away from known breeding sites in 1999. Note the pronounced arrival at the end of May, and the more even spread of records between August and early November, with a peak in late August.



Tim Loseby

328. Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*, Cliffe, Kent, September 1983.

Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1986-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-1999			Annual means 1986-1999	
			1987	1989	1988	1986-89	1990-99
101	2,783	10	365	363	323	282	166

In contrast to the fortunes of the preceding species, 1999 was a relatively poor year for Grey Phalaropes in Britain, with only 101 reported, well below the average for the 1990s. The westerly bias in the geographical spread was typical, with 20 in both Cornwall and the Outer Hebrides and 12 in Scilly (including one 'at sea' just south of the islands). There were also six in both Devon and Norfolk, and five in Dorset, East Yorkshire and North Yorkshire. A further four counties recorded three, one had two and eight had just one.

Following seven in January, there were, unusually, three in May (all off North Uist, Outer Hebrides: one on 22nd and two on 23rd) and three in July (at Elmley, Kent, on 13th, and at North Ronaldsay and Papa Westray, both Orkney, on 21st and 22nd, respectively). In autumn, 41 were noted in September, 28 in October, 15 in November and four in December. No particular influx was evident, but 19 were recorded between 29th September and 4th October.

Sabine's Gull *Larus sabini*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1968-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-1999			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1987	1997	1988	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
89	4,031	15	710	396	346	51	202	140

The year 1999 was an unremarkable one for Sabine's Gulls in Britain, with only 89 individuals reported. There was just one in spring, on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on 25th May, although an adult in the Firth of Forth, Fife/Lothian, on 23rd June may conceivably be classed as a spring bird, too. (The last year without spring records was 1973.)

Three were seen in July, one in Durham and adults in both Avon and Orkney. Two first-summer individuals were reported on 1st August (in Avon and Cumbria), quickly followed by two adults, one between Whalsay and Out Skerries, Shetland, on 5th August and one at Pendeen, Cornwall, on 8th. A further 17 during 10th-22nd August included a flock of five at Trevose Head, Cornwall, on 18th and the year's first juvenile, at Long Nab, North Yorkshire, on 20th. There were 36 seen in September, an additional 26 in October, and just one in November, at Formby, Lancashire, on 6th. With the exception of the unprecedented arrival during the storm of mid-October 1987, the peak period for Sabine's Gulls is usually the first ten days of September. In 1999, sightings peaked slightly later, with 43 (49%) of the 87 autumn records occurring between 20th September and 10th October.

Autumn records came from 16 counties, including 34 in Cornwall, 11 in East Yorkshire, ten in Devon, six in Dorset, five in Scilly and three in Ayrshire. The only inland record was of an adult at Queen Mother Reservoir, Berkshire, on 29th September.

Ring-billed Gull *Larus delawarensis*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1970-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1970-1999			Annual means 1970-1999		
			1992	1990	1997	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
20	1,244	19	103	94	88	4	47	74

An estimated 24 Ring-billed Gulls were recorded in Britain in 1999 and, of these, 20 were judged to be new arrivals. This was, therefore, the poorest year for this gull in Britain since 1980 (at which time Ring-billed Gull was still on the list of species considered by the BBRC). In particular, there were very few newly arrived immatures; in fact, only two first-winters were seen (compared with the 1990s mean of 16), at Par, Cornwall, from 27th January to 27th February and on St Mary's, Scilly, on 2nd-8th November. Similarly, only two new first-summers were reported, at Barassie, Ayrshire, in June and at Seaforth, Merseyside, in July; and three new second-year birds, on Tiree, Argyll, in May, at Hayle, Cornwall, in February and on the Ugie estuary, North-east Scotland, from late August.

Reports came from 15 counties, but only Cornwall (with four) recorded more than two new arrivals. On the east coast, the species was recorded in Kent (in February and March; possibly the same individual) and North Yorkshire (February and December; again, possibly the same bird), while an adult was inland at Brogborough, Bedfordshire, on 21st February. Otherwise, records were confined to the southwest, Lancashire and Scotland.

Sixteen new arrivals were found during the first half of the year, with two in January, six in February, five in March, one in May and two in June. In contrast, only four new individuals were reported during the second half of the year.

European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1958-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-1999			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1997	1990	1995	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
35	695	5	132	71	39	4	6	20	38

The total of 35 European Bee-eaters seen in 1999 makes this the fifth-best year since 1958. All but two were in England, where two flocks of ten were seen: at Cleadon Hill, Durham, during 20th-22nd May and in the Spurn area, East Yorkshire, on 23rd-24th May. It has been assumed in the above statistics that these two sightings refer to the same flock. Elsewhere, there were seven in Kent, including four at West Stourmouth on 10th May; a flock of six in Richmond, Greater London, on 10th June; six in Dorset, including three flying north over Portland on 11th June; two in Norfolk; and singles in Wiltshire and North Yorkshire. Two were seen in Scotland, both in the Northern Isles: on Papa Westray, Orkney, on 10th May and at Fladdabister, Shetland, on 6th

July. The latter individual was relocated on the following day on Unst, the northernmost of the Shetland islands, where it remained until 10th October, thereby becoming the longest-staying individual of its species ever in Britain. The only other autumn record was of a juvenile on St Mary's, Scilly, from 29th September to 5th October.

As shown in fig. 12, the records in 1999 had a predominantly southerly and easterly bias. Heavily influenced by the arrival of the big flock in northeast England, May accounted for more than half the year's records (fig. 13).

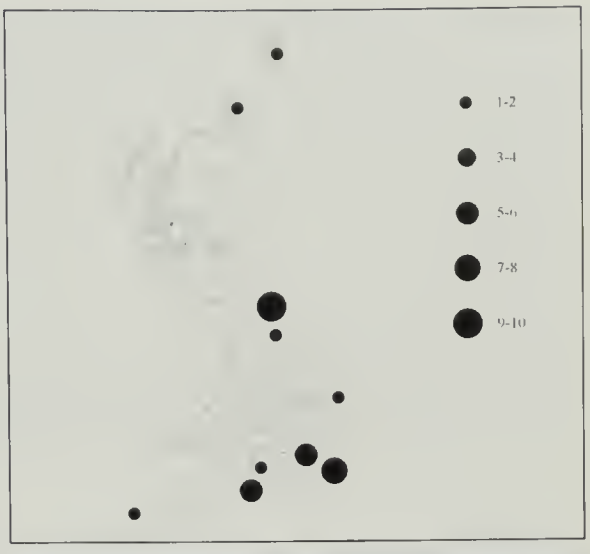
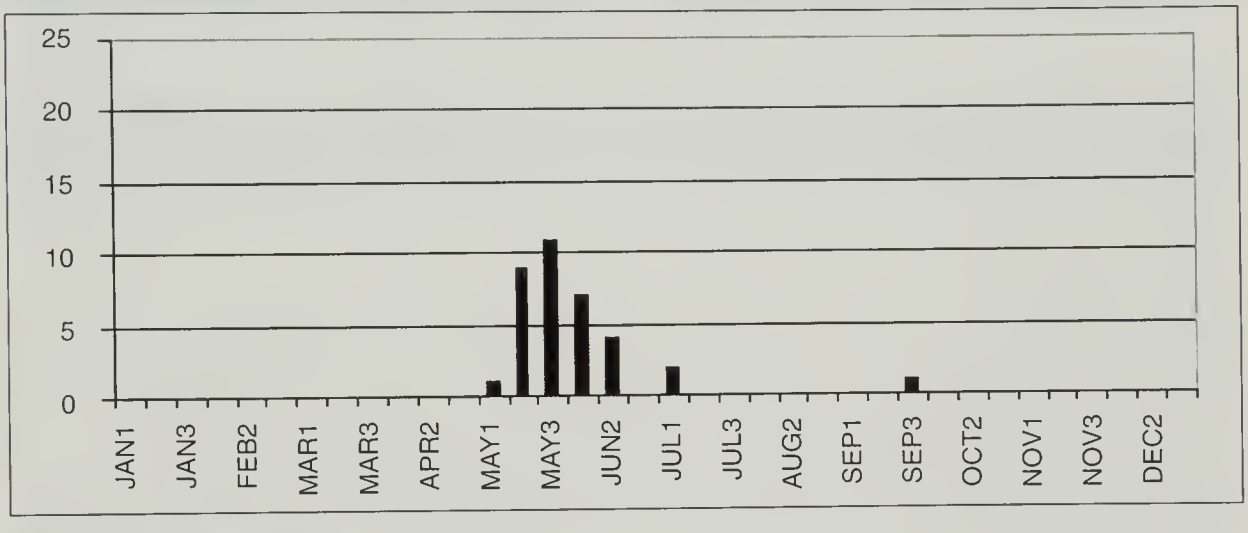


Fig. 12. (Above) Distribution of European Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster* in Britain in 1999. Note the predominance of the eastern and southern regions.

Fig. 13. (Below) Numbers of European Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster* in Britain in 1999. Of the year's 35 individuals, 21 were first seen in May.



Hoopoe *Upupa epops*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1968-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-1999			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1968	1980	1977	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
65	3,912	31	218	188	178	118	133	116

Only 65 Hoopoes were reported in Britain in 1999, which constitutes the second-poorest year since national collation of records of this species began, in 1968. Records were received from 28 counties and recording areas. A bias towards the southwest was apparent, with nine in Devon, six in Cornwall, Dorset and Wiltshire, four in Scilly, and three in Hampshire, Pembrokeshire and Sussex. Nevertheless, there were still ten in Scotland, including four in Shetland, and singles in another six recording areas.

The first two records were both in Wales, one from the Carmarthen/Ceredigion border on 22nd February (present there, or at nearby Pencader, until 13th March) and the other from Caldey Island, Pembrokeshire, on 9th-11th March. Five more arrived in March, and then ten in the first ten days of April and 12 in the middle third of that month. A further four arrived on 26th April. The remaining 15 comprised 11 in May and four in June. There is some evidence to suggest that Hoopoes are now appearing earlier in spring. Fig. 14 shows the mean arrival date of the first 20 Hoopoes in each year since 1968. The 'best-fit' line fitted to the graph shows that the

predicted mean date has shifted from 6th April (day 96) in 1968 to 31st March (day 90) by 1999.

Seventeen Hoopoes were recorded in autumn, well below the 1968-99 mean of 24. These occurred between 15th August and 23rd November, with a peak of four in the last week of October, the latter as far apart as Devon, on 24th, and Shetland, on 25th.

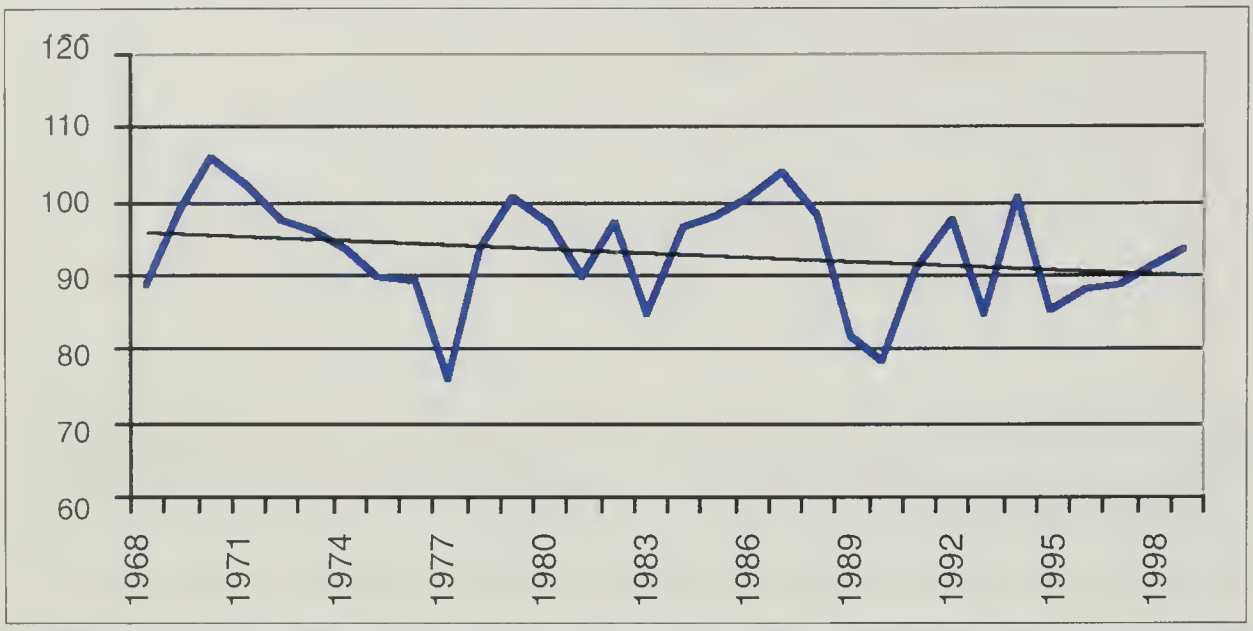


Fig. 14. Mean arrival date of the first 20 Hoopoes *Upupa epops* in Britain in each year, 1968-99. Figures on vertical axis indicate days of the year, where 1 = 1st January: e.g. 90 = 90th day (31st March). See text for further explanation.

Wryneck *Jynx torquilla*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1986-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-1999			Annual means 1986-1999	
			1998	1987	1988	1986-89	1990-99
142	3,708	13	407	354	314	311	254

Following the bumper invasion of 407 individuals in 1998, only 142 Wrynecks were recorded in Britain in 1999, which represents the second-poorest showing since the compilation of national totals for this species began, in 1986. It is, however, likely that the absence of records from Scilly and Kent will have affected this statistic to some degree.

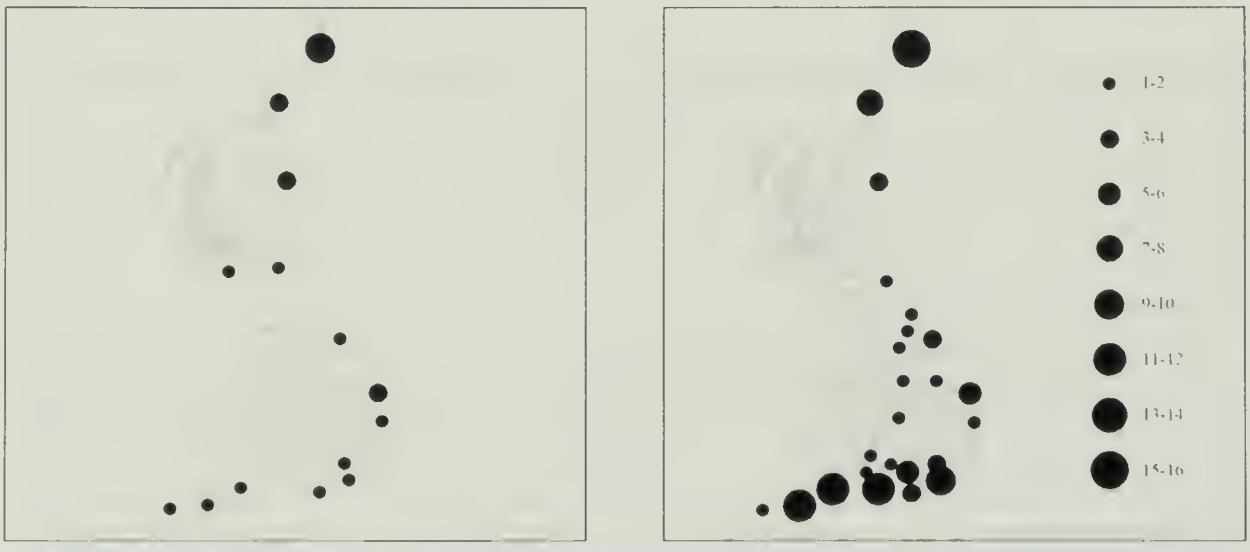


Fig. 15. Distribution of Wrynecks *Jynx torquilla* in Britain in spring (left) and autumn (right) in 1999.

A total of 35 Wrynecks was seen during the spring. In England, Norfolk (with four) was the only county to record more than two, whereas 20 (57%) of the 35 were in Scotland, 14 of these in the Northern Isles. In contrast, nearly half of the 107 autumn records were on the English south coast. There were 12 in both Cornwall and Dorset, 11 in Devon, nine in Sussex, five in Hampshire and three on the Isle of Wight. The 15 in Shetland form the most significant outlier to this pattern (fig. 15). The mean number of autumn migrants is 223, so that, even when the absence of Scilly and Kent data is taken into account, the total of 107 recorded in 1999 represents a lean year.

Spring passage began with one at Newhaven, Sussex, on 11th April, and peaked in the first ten days of May, when 15 were found. In autumn, most were seen at the end of August and the beginning of September, with 27 being found in the last ten days of August. New individuals were discovered daily from 22nd August to 22nd September, with a maximum of six on 26th August.

Short-toed Lark *Calandrella brachydactyla*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1958-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-1999			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1996	1994	1999	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
29	567	3	45	39	29	5	11	13	27

A total of 29 Short-toed Larks was seen in Britain in 1999, making this the third-best year since 1958, and further consolidating the recent increase in sightings in Britain (the three best years have all been during the 1990s). Of these 29, 19 were in spring and nine in autumn, with a mid-summer record of one on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on 20th July. The spring total is above the seasonal mean for the 1990s, which is 14.5, whereas the autumn total is below the respective mean of 12.

Spring records came from eight counties and recording areas, dominated as usual by Shetland (where there were nine) and Scilly (three), with two in Northumberland and singles in five other counties. One of the more unexpected records came from North Rona, Outer Hebrides, on 8th June. One at Sheringham, Norfolk, on 1st-3rd May was the first, followed by ten more during the first ten days of May, including an arrival of three on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 5th.

Autumn records comprised three in Shetland, two in Norfolk, and singles in Cornwall, Devon, Scilly and East Yorkshire. The first was at South Denes, Norfolk, on 20th September, followed by another five in September and two in the second half of October. The last was at Aldebrough, East Yorkshire, on 26th-27th November, the sixth-latest ever in Britain. Remarkably, Britain's second-latest Short-toed Lark on record was also seen at this site, on 9th-22nd December 1987 (*Brit. Birds* 82: 536).

Horned Lark *Eremophila alpestris*

Following the massive influx of Horned Larks into Britain in autumn 1998, which may have involved as many as 1,500 individuals, large numbers still remained during the early months of 1999. The largest concentration was in Norfolk, where about 260 were present in January. Elsewhere, approximately 130 were found in Suffolk, at least 85 and possibly as many as 175 in Lincolnshire, 80 in North Yorkshire, 35 in Flintshire and 30 in East Yorkshire. Numbers gradually declined during the late winter and spring. Farther north, a thin northward passage was evident in several areas between mid-April and the end of May, notably in Shetland (where at least 28 individuals were seen). Among those seen in Shetland, one on Fair Isle on 14th May had previously been colour-ringed on its wintering grounds in Norfolk.

There were fewer arrivals in autumn 1999, with a small passage through northeast England in October and November, including five watched coming in off the sea at Spurn, East Yorkshire, on 31st October. In addition, one was seen on 16th October at Nanjizal, Cornwall, well away from the usual migration routes and wintering areas. By the end of the year, barely 175 were present in the country, with 90 in Norfolk and perhaps 35 in both Suffolk and Lincolnshire, plus one or two at a number of other sites.

Richard's Pipit *Anthus novaeseelandiae*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1958-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-1999			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1994	1995	1988	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
108	2,846	8	338	157	144	34	51	65	127

Although the 108 Richard's Pipits recorded in 1999 represent the eighth-best year since 1958, this total was still well below the annual mean for the 1990s, further confirmation of the fact that this species is now more frequent in Britain than it used to be. Records were received from 17 counties and recording areas. Of the 15 Scottish records, all but one (from North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on 21st October) were in Shetland. Six were found in Wales, while in England there were approximately 31 in Norfolk, 16 in Cornwall, 11 in Scilly and ten in East Yorkshire. Eleven other counties had one or more, but the species was, nevertheless, still very much concentrated in traditional hot-spots.

The four spring records were fewer than the spring mean for the 1990s (six). The first was at Marazion Marsh, Cornwall, from 28th March to 11th April, while another was in Cornwall during this period, at Trevose Head on 10th. The two other spring records were both in Norfolk, at Salthouse on 25th-28th April and at Sheringham on 6th May.

In autumn, one at Sherpa Marsh, Devon, on 10th August equalled the previous earliest arrival (at Steart, Somerset, in 1997: *Brit. Birds* 92: 640). Two more early migrants turned up in the southwest, at Prawle, Devon, on 5th September and at Shapwick, Somerset, on the following day. After a further three in mid-September, the first of two main influxes began in the last ten days of that month, during which period 17 were recorded, followed by 34 in the middle ten-day period of October, with 12 discovered on 16th October alone. A smaller peak, of ten individuals, was subsequently registered in mid-November. Two Richard's Pipits in Flintshire, which stayed until the year's end, were the last in what was another good year for this species.

Tawny Pipit *Anthus campestris*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1958-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-1999			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1992	1983	1977	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
5	1,068	42	57	56	45	13	27	36	29

A mere five Tawny Pipits were recorded in 1999, the lowest annual total since the BBRC began considering records, in 1958. The five were as follows (in chronological order): South Gare, Cleveland, 12th-13th May; Spurn, East Yorkshire, 18th May; Portland Bill, Dorset, 3rd-4th September; Scilly, 6th September; and Bockhill, Kent, 11th September. The almost constant decline in the numbers of Tawny Pipits seen in Britain during the 1990s is shown in fig. 16.

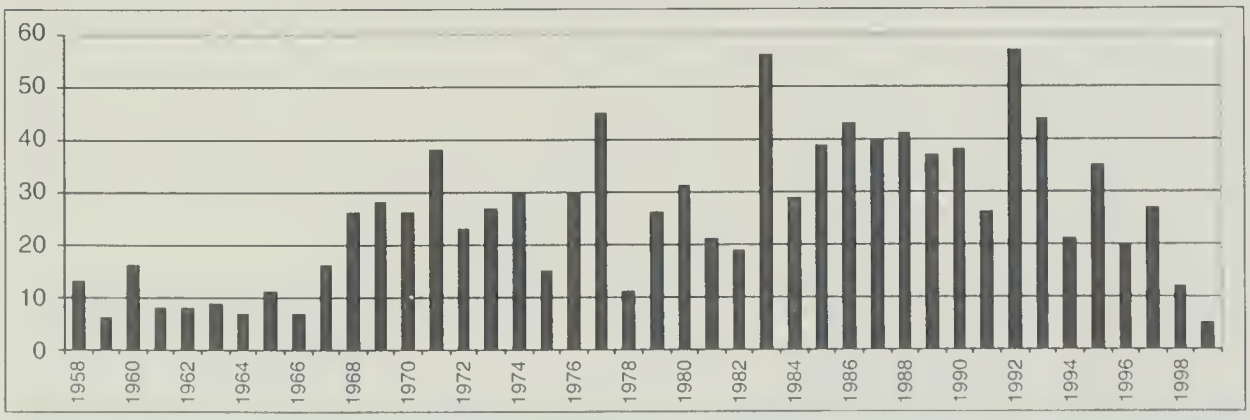


Fig. 16. Numbers of Tawny Pipits *Anthus campestris* in Britain, 1958-99. Note the almost constant decline since the peak numbers of 1992.

Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1968-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-1999			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1985	1981	1987	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
47	4,166	29	622	333	251	98	186	113

Only 47 Bluethroats were recorded in Britain in 1999, which was (jointly with 1983) the third-poorest year for this species since 1968. Sightings were received from ten counties and recording areas. Typically, the Northern Isles dominated the national total, with 26 (53%) seen in Shetland and ten in Orkney. Elsewhere, three were recorded in Dorset and two in Northumberland, plus singles in Gwent, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Northeast Scotland, the Isle of Wight and East Yorkshire.

There were 22 Bluethroats in spring 1999; in only one year since 1968 (1991, when 20 were reported) have fewer individuals been recorded at this season. The first arrival was not until 8th May (on Fair Isle, Shetland), following which a further six were located up to 24th May, but the main arrival was somewhat later than usual, between 28th May and 3rd June (when 14 were recorded). One on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on 14th June was the last of the spring. Only five of the spring records were in England, two of them in Dorset, at Durlston on 30th May and at Portland Bill on 31st.

Autumn, like spring, was distinctly unremarkable, with 25 individuals recorded in total. Of the 15 reported in September, from 14th onwards, only one (at Ventnor Downs, Isle of Wight, on 28th) was away from Shetland. There were a further nine in October: four in Shetland, one in Northeast Scotland and four farther south, including one at Uskmouth, Gwent, on 1st. An unusually late record involved one at Virkie, Shetland, on 6th November.



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329. Bluethroat *Luscinia svecica*, Virkie, Shetland, May 1998.

Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1958-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-1999			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1976	1991	1972	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
21	1,161	21	102	62	61	10	40	23	42

In 1999, 21 Aquatic Warblers were recorded in Britain, a total on a par with the mean for the whole recording period of 1958-99, but well below average for the 1990s. Records were received from 11 counties or recording areas. Sussex contributed most, with eight, but Kent (three) and Dorset (two) were the only other counties to contribute more than one to the annual total. Away from the English south coast, there were two in Wales, at Penclacwydd, Carmarthenshire, on 2nd August and at Kenfig, Glamorgan, on 29th September; and two in Scotland, on Trondra, Shetland, on 1st August and on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on 21st-22nd September.

The northernmost record in England was at Boddington Reservoir, Northamptonshire, on 16th September.

The Trondra record was the first of the year, the earliest ever in Shetland, and one of the earliest records for Britain (there have been just four July records, plus two in June and one in May). It was the 38th for Scotland, of which, remarkably, only one has been seen on the mainland (at St Abb's, Borders, on 22nd August 1977). In 1999, the timing of the main influx was typical, with six recorded in the middle ten-day period of August, and daily arrivals between 30th August and 5th September. The records in Orkney and Glamorgan were the last of the year.

Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1986-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-1999			Annual means 1986-1999	
			1992	1996	1997	1986-89	1990-99
46	618	6	102	58	57	30	50

In 1999, 46 Marsh Warblers were recorded, just below the mean for the 1990s. Migrants were reported from 14 counties and recording areas. Typically for this species, east-coast localities were responsible for the majority of reports, with eight in Shetland, seven in Suffolk, six in Kent, five in Norfolk, four in Northumberland and Sussex, and two in Lincolnshire, Orkney, East Yorkshire and North Yorkshire. The remaining singles were in Greater London, Lancashire, Scilly and Somerset.

Spring records predominated, as usual, and began with one at Flamborough, East Yorkshire, on 4th May, which is the second-earliest record since 1986. Numbers increased at the end of May, with the main passage occurring in mid-June. Twenty-five (54%) of this year's records were in June, conforming to a now well-established pattern.

There were six July records, and just four later in the autumn: at Hauxley, Northumberland, on 20th August; on Fair Isle, Shetland, from 25th August to 2nd September; at North Cotes, Lincolnshire, on 12th-16th September; and at Porthellick, St Mary's, Scilly, on 24th October. The problems of separating Marsh Warbler from other unstreaked *Acrocephalus* warblers must surely be a factor that is keeping the number of autumn records low; the autumn mean, for the period from 1986 to 1999, is only 7.2 individuals per year.

Icterine Warbler *Hippolais icterina*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1968-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-1999			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1997	1992	1995	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
65	3,361	23	286	276	173	79	104	137

There were 65 Icterine Warblers seen in Britain in 1999, which constitutes a poor year for this species. This figure is, in fact, less than half (47%) the mean annual total for the 1990s. Records of Icterine Warblers were received from 17 counties and recording areas. Island archipelagos at opposite ends of Britain were responsible for the majority of records, with 15 in Shetland and 12 in Scilly. Elsewhere, seven were found in Norfolk, six in East Yorkshire, five in Kent and Orkney, three in Northumberland, two in Dorset and North Yorkshire, and singles in another eight counties.

Spring passage was good, with 24 individuals reported, most of which (17) were in the Northern Isles. This ranks as the seventh-best spring since national record collation began, in 1968. The first was on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 13th May, followed by an arrival of eight on 19th-20th May, five more in late May, and seven during 4th-6th June.

In contrast, autumn passage was particularly poor. Only in 1969 and 1972 have fewer Icterine Warblers been seen in autumn than the 41 in 1999. Two on the Farne Islands, Northumberland, on 4th August were the first, and another six appeared by 9th. Two arrived on 18th, then a

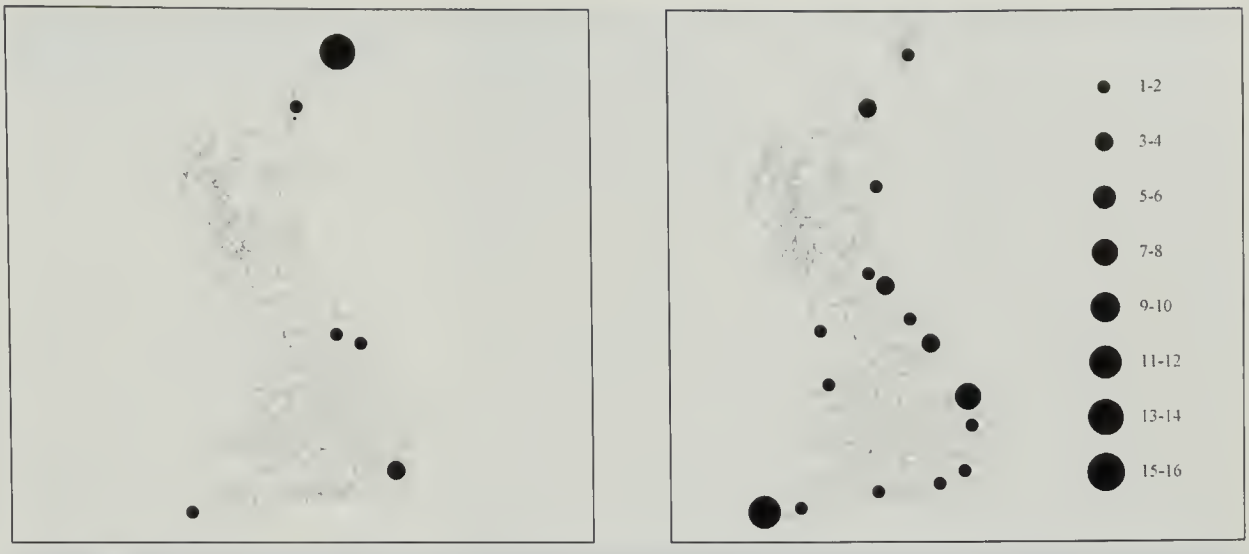


Fig. 17. Distribution of Icterine Warblers *Hippolais icterina* in Britain in spring (May-June, left) and autumn (August-October, right) in 1999. Note the concentration in the Northern Isles in spring, and along the east coast and in Scilly in autumn.

further 15 during the rest of that month. There were 11 in the first half of September, but only four in the second half, with the last on Tresco, Scilly, on 5th October. The marked contrast between the spring and autumn distributions of Icterine Warblers in 1999 is shown in fig. 17.

Melodious Warbler *Hippolais polyglotta*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1968-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-1999			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1981	1996	1983	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
13	1,034	30	60	58	54	29	39	30

As with the preceding species, 1999 was a very poor year for Melodious Warblers in Britain, with just 13 recorded. This is the joint second-worst year for the species since 1968; only 1969, when a mere 11 were seen, ranks lower.

The records were as follows: at Portland Bill, Dorset, on 30th May, 19th June, 19th August, 1st September, and 10th-13th September; on the Calf of Man, Isle of Man, on 12th June; at Land's End, Cornwall, on 14th-15th August; at Nanjizal, Cornwall, on 22nd August; on Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, on 29th August; at Hengistbury Head, Dorset, on 29th August; at Porthgwarra, Cornwall, on 12th October; on Stronsay, Orkney, during 16th-19th October; and on Grogarry, Outer Hebrides, on 17th-18th October.

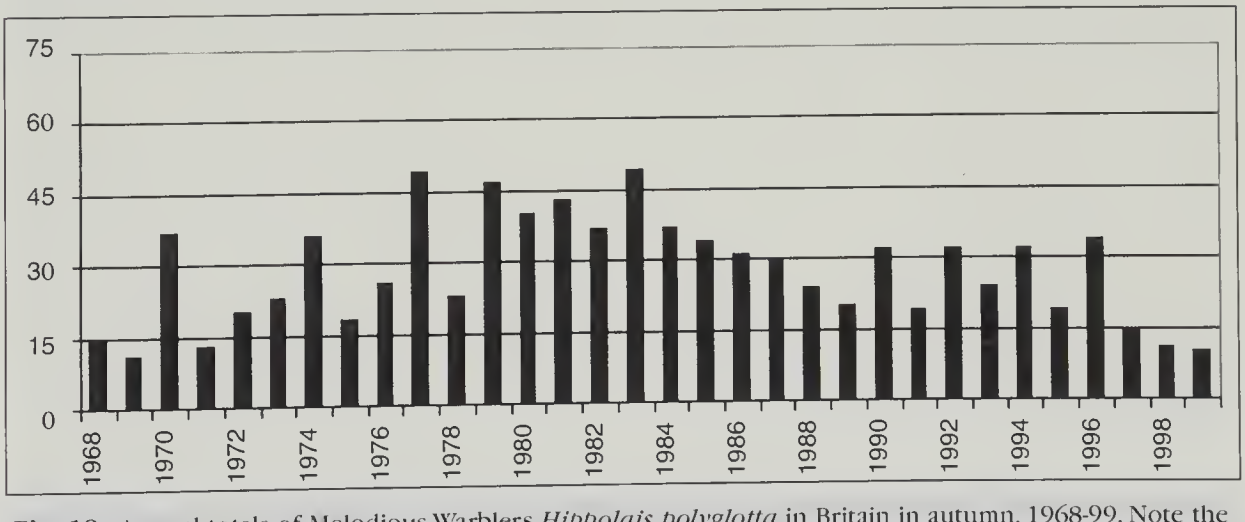


Fig. 18. Annual totals of Melodious Warblers *Hippolais polyglotta* in Britain in autumn, 1968-99. Note the general decline in numbers from the early 1980s.

These records were fairly typical, although the last two were both extremely late for sites so far north. Only 32 Melodious Warblers have been recorded in the Northern Isles since 1968, and there has been only one previous record on the Outer Hebrides. No more than 50 have been recorded on or later than 15th October. Not surprisingly, this represents the poorest autumn since 1968, while the best autumns were between 1977 and 1983. As suggested by fig. 18, the species' fortunes may be in long-term decline.

Barred Warbler *Sylvia nisoria*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1968-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-1999			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1994	1997	1996	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
135	4,363	15	231	219	202	144	108	156

A total of 135 Barred Warblers was recorded in Britain in 1999, some way short of the annual mean during the 1990s. Records were received from 24 counties and recording areas but, typically, northern areas accounted for the majority of them. Indeed, 88 (65% of the British total) were seen in Scotland, of which 71 were in Shetland; Fair Isle, where approximately 26 were logged, was the best single site in Britain. Elsewhere in Scotland, there were ten in Orkney, two in Angus & Dundee, Borders and Northeast Scotland, and one in Fife. In northern England, seven were recorded in East Yorkshire, six in Northumberland and two in Cleveland. A total of 16 was reported from coastal counties between Lincolnshire and Scilly, but the species also appeared in the west of Britain, with singles in Pembrokeshire, Caernarfonshire, Isle of Man, Lancashire and Cumbria. Since 1968, approximately 43 have been recorded in Wales, and 52 in northwest England and the Isle of Man.

No Barred Warblers were reported in spring in 1999. The first of the year was on Fair Isle, on 1st August, while another early arrival, at Welbeck, Nottinghamshire, on 4th August, was only the fourth for that county since 1968. The sheer numbers in the Northern Isles make it difficult to assess the true pattern of arrivals. There was, however, a marked influx at the end of August, with at least 35 appearing between 25th and 31st, followed by a more protracted series of records, involving at least 55 individuals, throughout September. Thirteen were seen in October, while the last was at Angle, Pembrokeshire, on 26th November.

Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1958-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-1999			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1997	1994	1996	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
88	1,298	5	171	152	141	3	9	39	78

The records of 88 Pallas's Leaf Warblers seen in 1999 came from 21 counties and recording areas. The total is likely to be a slight underestimate, since no official records were received from Kent, one of the species' most favoured counties, where, anecdotally, there were at least another seven. In 1999, as usual, the east and south coasts of England accounted for the majority of records, with 11 in both Norfolk and East Yorkshire, nine in Cornwall, eight in Dorset, seven in Suffolk, six in Northumberland, four in Devon, Lincolnshire and North Yorkshire, three in Scilly, two in Cleveland, Sussex and the Isle of Wight, and one in Durham. One at Whitwell, Derbyshire, from 30th October to 1st November was the first record for that county. In addition, there were 13 in Scotland: four in Shetland, three in Northeast Scotland, two in Borders and Orkney, and singles in Angus & Dundee and Fife.

The 1999 total is slightly above the annual average for the 1990s, although well below the totals in the three outstanding years of 1994, 1996 and 1997. The first records were not until 15th October, when three arrived on Fair Isle, Shetland, with others on that day on the Farne Islands, Northumberland, at Filey, North Yorkshire, and at Landguard, Suffolk. Another 23 arrived



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330. Pallas's Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus proregulus*, Unst, Shetland, November 1994.

on 16th-17th October, 20 more during 18th-21st, and a further 33 during 22nd-31st. Of seven arrivals in November, the last was at Kynance Downs, Cornwall, on 15th. There was also one late record, of one at St Levan, Cornwall, on 31st December.

Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1968-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-1999			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1988	1985	1986	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
232	7,260	15	739	542	498	72	320	320

The total of 232 Yellow-browed Warblers seen in Britain in 1999 is well below the annual average for the 1990s of 320. Indeed, the year was the second-poorest for the species since 1983.

Sightings occurred right along the east and south coasts from Shetland to Scilly, with the following areas reporting ten or more: Shetland (62), Cornwall (28), Norfolk (24), Northumberland (21), Scilly (20) and East Yorkshire (19). Ten other counties and recording areas had more than one, while a further seven each recorded just one. Records away from the favoured areas included singles at Glennagoidh, Argyll, on 13th-14th October, at Eskmeals, Cumbria, on 17th October, at Fazackerley, North Merseyside, on 4th October, and, in Worcestershire, at Upton Warren and North Hill on, respectively, 3rd and 13th October.

One at Slapton Ley, Devon, from 20th February to 2nd April was the only record outside the main autumn period. The first to appear in autumn was on Lundy, Devon, on 16th September, and a further 68 arrived in that month. No fewer than 27 were first reported on 27th September, and there were daily records until 25th October, with at least 26 new arrivals on 16th October. Eight new birds appeared in November, while the last of the year was at Lower Pennington, Hampshire, on 1st-4th December.

Red-breasted Flycatcher *Ficedula parva*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1968-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-1999			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1984	1976	1989	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
65	2,910	26	196	174	128	75	115	86

The 65 Red-breasted Flycatchers seen in Britain in 1999 is a figure well below the annual average for the 1990s of 86. In fact, notably fewer individuals, on average 30 fewer per year, have appeared in Britain during this decade than did in the previous one.

There were just five spring records in 1999, which is on a par with the mean for 1968-99. Singles occurred on the Calf of Man, Isle of Man, on 30th April and at Marsden Quarry, Durham,

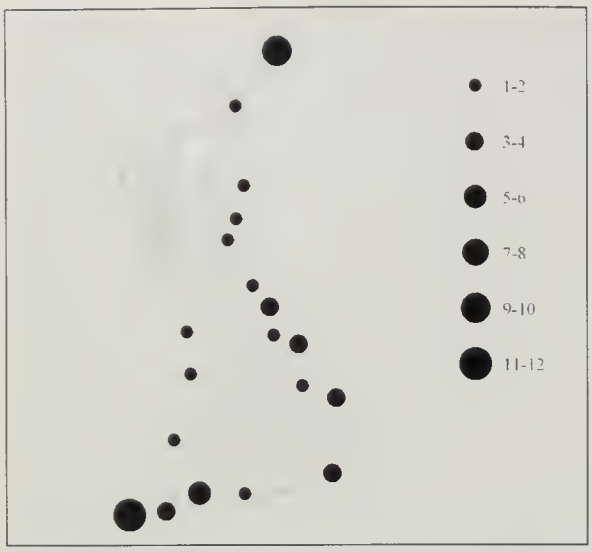


Fig. 19. Distribution of Red-breasted Flycatchers *Ficedula parva* in Britain in autumn 1999. Typically, the majority were seen along the east and south coasts, but note also the records in Wales and the Irish Sea basin.

on 12th May, followed by three in two days: at North Cotes, Lincolnshire, and at Landguard, Suffolk, on 19th May, and on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 20th-21st May.

The 60 autumn migrants were found across some 19 counties and recording areas. The top five counties were Scilly (ten), Shetland (nine), Devon (five), and Kent and East Yorkshire (both with four). The even spread of records along the east coast, together with a concentration in the southwest, is shown in fig. 19. This species does, however, occur almost annually in Wales and the Irish Sea basin, too, where there have been some 145 records since 1968. In addition to the spring record mentioned above, two more were seen on the Isle of Man (different individuals on 3rd and 4th September), as well as one on Anglesey, on 12th October, and two on Skomer, Pembrokeshire, on 3rd and 17th October.

Just one August record, on Fetlar, Shetland, on 13th, was followed by 22 in September and 37 in October. There was no obvious peak in arrivals, and the best days were 22nd September and 15th October, on each of which four new birds were recorded. The last was at Black Head, Cornwall, on 28th October.

Golden Oriole *Oriolus oriolus*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1968-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-1999			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1994	1992	1997	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
73	2,711	15	232	183	157	48	84	129

Excluding those at known breeding sites, 73 Golden Orioles were seen in Britain in 1999, which is well below the annual average for the 1990s of 129. This relatively poor year thus runs counter to the general trend of increasing numbers since the 1970s.

Records were received from 19 counties and recording areas. The top counties were Scilly (22), Shetland (nine), Suffolk (eight), Cornwall (seven), Dorset (five) and Norfolk (four). Records from unexpected localities included singles at Newcastle Golf Club, Northumberland, on 30th May; at Usinish, Outer Hebrides, on 31st May; at Nostel Dam, West Yorkshire, on 31st May; at Drakelow, Derbyshire, on 6th June; and at Swillington Ings, West Yorkshire, on 28th August.

54 (74%) individuals appeared in May, the first two on 1st May, at Prawle, Devon, and at Scolt Head, Norfolk. An arrival of 11 was reported during 14th-16th, but the main influx occurred between 28th May and 1st June, when 27 were found. Subsequently, there were a further ten in June, and just two in July, at Minsmere, Suffolk, on 2nd, and at Brae, Shetland, on 4th. In August, the individual at Swillington Ings was the only record, while the last of the year was one on Fair Isle, Shetland, on 13th September.

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1986-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-1999			Annual means 1986-1999	
			1988	1998	1992	1986-89	1990-99
98	3,291	14	423	371	362	255	227

In 1999, just 98 migrant Red-backed Shrikes were seen in Britain, which is easily the poorest year for this species since national record collation began, in 1986. Indeed, in only four of the previous 14 years have fewer than 200 been recorded, let alone fewer than 100. This is in stark contrast to the bumper year of 1998 and the pattern of increasing numbers in each of the previous six years (*Brit. Birds* 93: 633-634). Of those that were seen, a large proportion (34) were in Shetland, while there were 11 in Scilly and East Yorkshire, four in Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Norfolk, and three in Northumberland, Suffolk and Sussex.

Both seasons were dismal, with only 40 in spring and 56 in autumn. The distribution across Britain was typically more northerly in spring than in autumn, as shown in fig. 20.

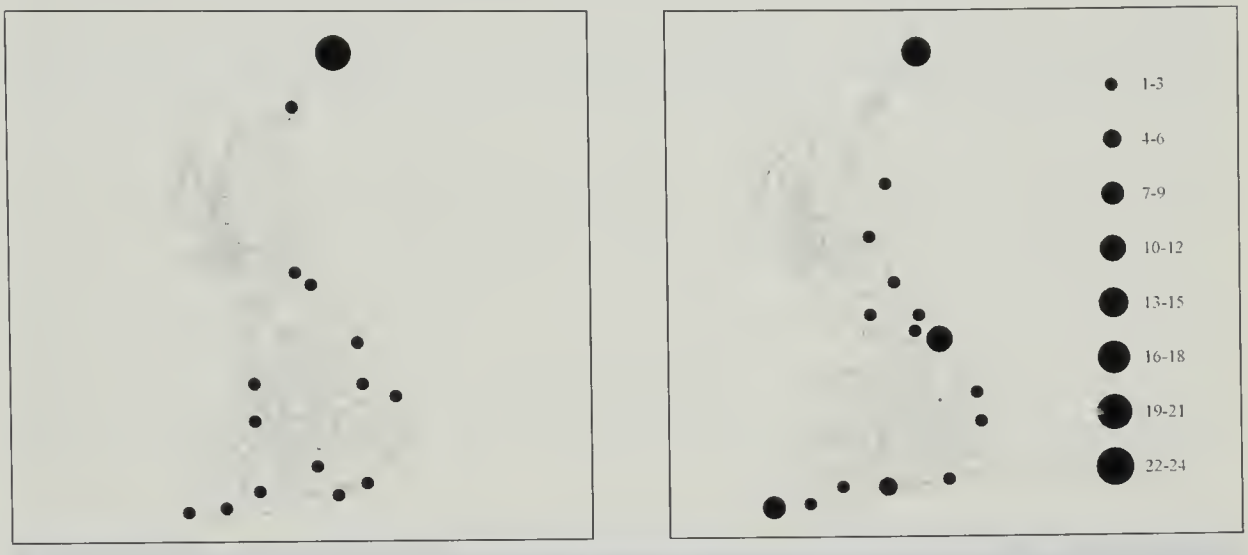


Fig. 20. Distribution of Red-backed Shrikes *Lanius collurio* in Britain in spring (left) and autumn (right) 1999. Note the marked concentration in Shetland in spring, and a more widespread distribution in autumn.

The first spring record was on Whalsay, Shetland, on 13th May, and passage continued until 16th June. A peak was evident in the last week of May. Fair Isle, Shetland, had 11 individuals between 19th May and 14th June, including four on 29th May.

Following two midsummer records in July, in Norfolk and Wiltshire, the first of the autumn was at Girdleness, Northeast Scotland, on 5th August. A further 15 occurred in August, and then 27 in September and 12 in October, with the last at Culdrose, Cornwall, on 2nd November. There was no obvious peak in these autumn arrivals, but just a trickle of new individuals throughout the period.

Great Grey Shrike *Lanius excubitor*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1986-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1986-1999			Annual means 1986-1999	
			1998	1990	1991	1986-89	1990-99
108	1,767	11	234	160	160	131	125

Of an estimated 127 Great Grey Shrikes recorded in Britain in 1999, a minimum of 19 were assumed to have remained from the record-breaking influx of 1998 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 634). It is possible that rather more had already arrived in the previous year, since this figure of 19 was derived simply by counting those individuals which had been recorded at the same, or nearby, sites in 1998.

Great Grey Shrikes were seen in 33 counties and recording areas. Norfolk, with 13 new birds, topped the list, followed by East Yorkshire (11) and Northumberland (nine). Elsewhere, there were ten in Hampshire (but only two new arrivals), eight in Sussex (six new) and seven in Dorset (two new). Devon, Orkney and Surrey all recorded six individuals (five new in Surrey).

The pattern of arrival through the year is shown in fig. 21. Compared with 1998, a far higher

percentage of individuals arrived in January and February, 26 (24%) in 1999 against 13 (6%) in 1998, which also suggests that some of those which we have interpreted as new arrivals may have first appeared in 1998. There were four more in March, and then a small passage in April (11 individuals) and May (six, all in northern England and Scotland). In addition, a further six were seen in Devon during the spring (dates not specified).

Most records in 1999 were in autumn, with two in September (Saltfleetby, Lincolnshire, on 19th, and Slains, Northeast Scotland, on 28th), 35 in October and 13 in November. Five new birds arrived in December.

Assuming that our figure of 108 is a reasonably accurate total of new arrivals, it represents something of a return to form for a species which, until 1998, had declined inexorably from 160 in 1990 and 1991 to 53 in 1997. Alternatively, if many more of those seen in the early months of 1999 had, in fact, already reached Britain in 1998, then we may be witnessing the continued decline of this shrike.

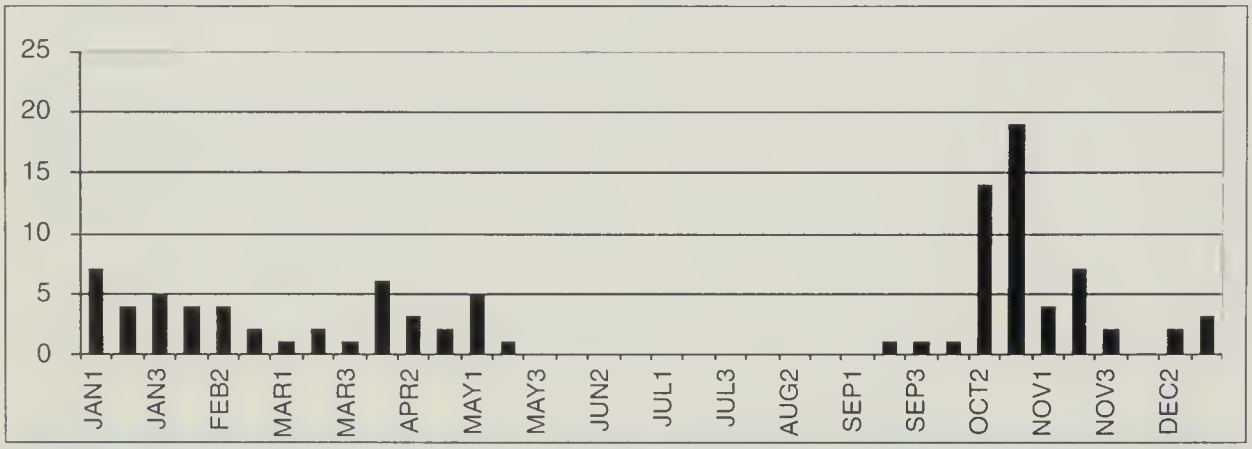
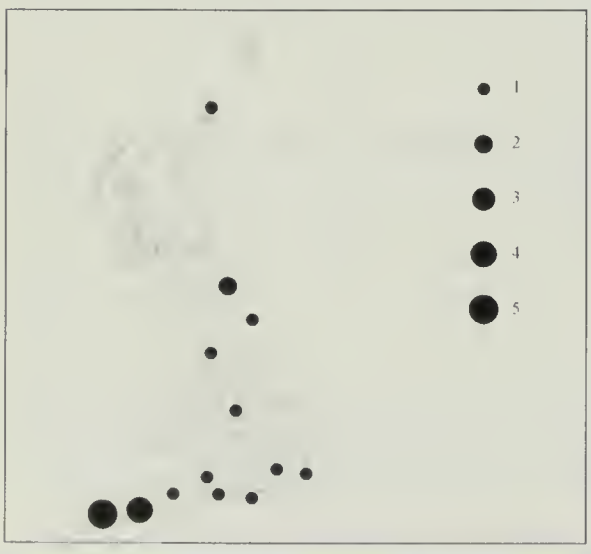


Fig. 21. Numbers of Great Grey Shrikes *Lanius excubitor* reaching Britain in 1999. Note that only those records which have specified arrival dates are used in this figure (n=101).

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1958-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-1999			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1997	1995	1988	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
21	636	9	36	27	26	12	13	16	21

The 21 Woodchat Shrikes seen in Britain in 1999 equal the mean annual total for the 1990s. Records were received from 13 counties and recording areas. Except for one on Stronsay, Orkney, on 26th September, all were in England. Most were seen in the far southwest, with five in Scilly and four in Cornwall. Elsewhere, there were two in Northumberland and singles in nine other English counties (fig. 22).



Of the 21 records, 18 were in spring, between April and June. Spring 1999 was the fifth-best since 1958, and supports the 1990s trend towards higher numbers at that season (fig. 23). Two were recorded in April, on St Agnes, Scilly, on 21st-27th and at Foreland, Isle of Wight, on 25th. In May, there were five in the first ten-day period, three in the middle of the month and five again in the last ten days. Three

Fig. 22. Distribution of Woodchat Shrikes *Lanius senator* in Britain in 1999. The majority of records were in southwest England.

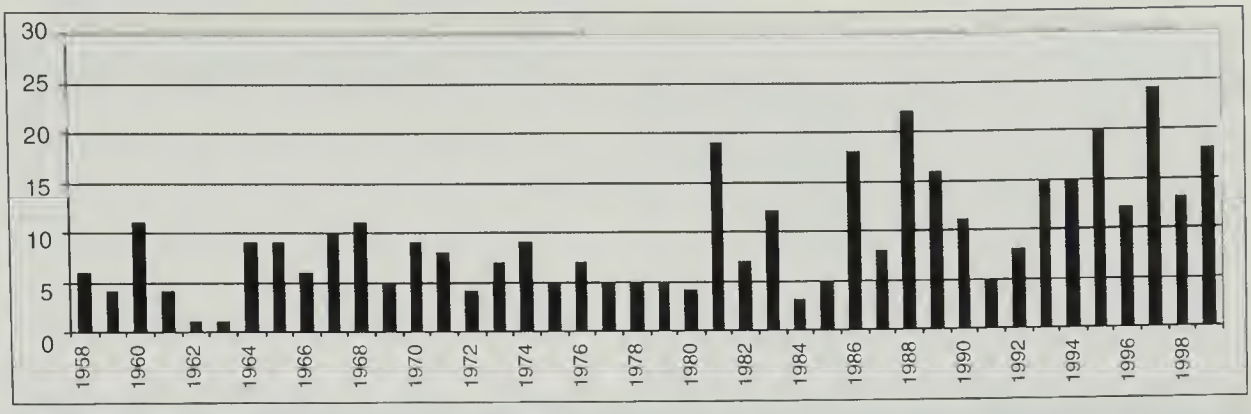


Fig. 23. Numbers of Woodchat Shrikes *Lanius senator* in Britain in spring in each year 1958-99. Note the sustained increase from the early 1980s.

were seen in June, with the last at Lydd, Kent, on 13th.

The three individuals in autumn were on St Agnes, Scilly, on 27th August, at Leighton Moss, Lancashire, on 28th August and, as mentioned above, on Stronsay on 26th September.

European Serin *Serinus serinus*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1958-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-1999			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1996	1994	1997	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
27	1,321	20	99	80	75	8	19	37	66

Only 27 European Serins were seen in Britain in 1999, which constitutes an extremely poor year total. Although no records were received from Kent, one of the most regular counties for records of this species, it seems unlikely that this would have dramatically altered the general picture. The year 1999 was, therefore, in marked contrast to the rest of the 1990s, when a steady increase in numbers was observed throughout the decade, and when the three highest annual totals were amassed.

The 27 records came from only seven counties and recording areas. Almost all (24) were on the English south coast, with (from west to east) four in Scilly, six in Cornwall, five in Dorset and the Isle of Wight, and four in Sussex. Elsewhere, two were located in Suffolk and one on the Calf of Man on 9th September, the latter being the first for the Isle of Man.

There were 19 in spring, with a typically early start for the species. Five were seen in the last ten days of March, and these were followed by eight in April and six in May, though with no obvious concentration of arrival dates. In autumn, a further eight comprised two in September, five in October and the last, at Carn Brea, Cornwall, on 11th November.

Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1958-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-1999			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1992	1995	1997	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
113	2,710	10	242	180	162	10	37	76	146

In 1999, 113 Common Rosefinches were reported in Britain. This total, which 20 years ago would have been regarded as exceptional, was well below the annual mean for the 1990s, when this species has been recorded in much greater numbers; indeed, the seven highest totals have all occurred during this decade.

Records came from 25 counties and recording areas, with almost half (50) from Shetland. Scilly was the only other recording area to reach double figures, with 12, while nine were found in Orkney, seven in North Yorkshire, five in East Yorkshire and three in Suffolk.

Spring migration in 1999, with only 33 recorded, was particularly poor, at least when compared with previous years in the 1990s. After a very early record, on 7th March, of an immature male caught in a garden in Swinton, Greater Manchester, the next was not until 24th May, on Fetlar, Shetland, and another 15 were reported between then and 2nd June. The remaining 16 arrived during the rest of June. Away from the regular sites in the Northern Isles, there were two in Argyll, at Arduaine on 10th June and at Bowmore on 23rd June, plus a male in song at Oswaldtwistle, Lancashire, during 11th-21st June, and one at Strumble Head, Pembrokeshire, on 30th May.

Following two midsummer records, in July, a better autumn passage followed the poor spring, with 78 individuals recorded, making this, in fact, the fifth-best autumn since 1958. The first was on Stronsay, Orkney, on 20th-21st August, and new individuals appeared on most days from then until the end of September. Fair Isle, Shetland, was the best single site, with 13 during this period. There was an upsurge of records in the last week of September, with 18 new arrivals between 23rd and 29th. Some of the more unexpected records in September included singles in the Gordano Valley, Avon, on 13th, at Weir Wood Reservoir, Sussex, on 17th, and at Bembridge, Isle of Wight, on 25th. Eleven were seen in October, culminating in the arrival of three on 27th in Scilly, two of them on St Agnes (one until 30th) and one on Tresco.

Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1968-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1968-1999			Annual means 1968-1999		
			1996	1969	1995	1968-79	1980-89	1990-99
54	1,913	19	118	114	89	53	58	71

The year 1999 proved to be a rather poor one for Ortolan Buntings in Britain, with the total of 54 reported being well below average for the 1990s, at least. Records were received from 13 counties and recording areas, with 12 in Dorset, nine in Shetland, five in both Cornwall and Scilly, and four in Kent, Norfolk, East Yorkshire and Orkney. The remaining seven were in Northumberland (two), Angus & Dundee, Devon, Durham, Greater London and Northeast Scotland.

Only 12 were seen in spring, between 30th April and 23rd May, with no obvious peak arrival period. All turned up on the south and east coasts between Scilly and Shetland, with the exception of a male at Barn Elms, London, on 6th May.

The total of 42 records in autumn is also poor by recent standards, being the lowest since 1990 and 1991, when only 32 were seen. The first was at Blakeney Point, Norfolk, on 28th August and the last at Nanjizal, Cornwall, on 25th October. There were three main pulses of new arrivals.

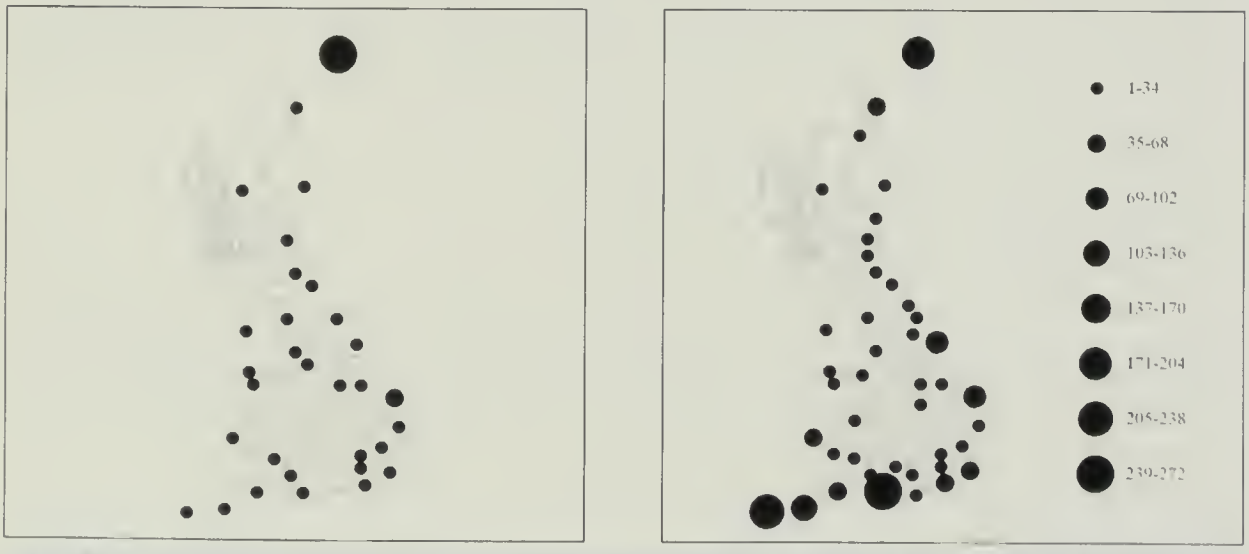


Fig. 24. Distribution of Ortolan Buntings *Emberiza hortulana* in Britain in spring (left) and autumn (right) during the period 1968-99. Note the marked seasonal difference in the species' status in southern England, compared with the strong showing of Shetland in both seasons.



Hugh Harrop

331. Ortolan Buntings *Emberiza hortulana*, Out Skerries, Shetland, September 1994.

Eleven were recorded during 2nd-4th September, including six in Dorset, but with others seen as far afield as the Lizard, Cornwall, and Spurn, East Yorkshire. The second, smaller arrival occurred on 12th September, when four new individuals appeared on the east coast. Finally, an influx of ten was reported during 21st-24th September, all but one (in Dorset) along the east coast, but much farther north, with six in Scotland and two others in Durham and Northumberland.

Little Bunting *Emberiza pusilla*

Number of individuals in 1999	Number of individuals in 1958-1999	Year rank	Highest annual maxima 1958-1999			Annual means 1958-1999			
			1987	1998	1993	1958-69	1970-79	1980-89	1990-99
11	691	21	49	45	45	5	10	24	29

With only 12 records (of 11 individual birds), 1999 was a poor year for Little Buntings in Britain. Indeed, this was the lowest annual total since the recent upsurge of records began, in 1984, and comparable with the 11 in 1982 and ten in 1983. The records, from seven counties and recording areas, were as follows (in chronological order): Kelly College, Devon, from 16th March to 7th April, and what was assumed to be the same individual returning there on 17th-21st November; Skomer, Pembrokeshire, on 7th May; Foula, Shetland, on 29th-30th September; Bardsey, Caernarfonshire, on 13th October; Tresco, Scilly, on 14th-15th October, with two there on 15th; St Mary's, Scilly, on 16th October; North Ronaldsay, Orkney, on 16th October; Flamborough Head, East Yorkshire, on 16th-17th October; Fair Isle, Shetland, also on 16th-17th October; and Costa Hill, Orkney, on 17th-19th November. No fewer than seven of these arrived between 13th and 16th October.

The Devon records are interesting. The individual in November was assumed to have been the same as the one seen earlier in the year, in March-April, and which may well have overwintered in 1998/99. The occurrence of Little Buntings in Britain in winter (between November and March) is, in fact, surprisingly regular (fig. 25).

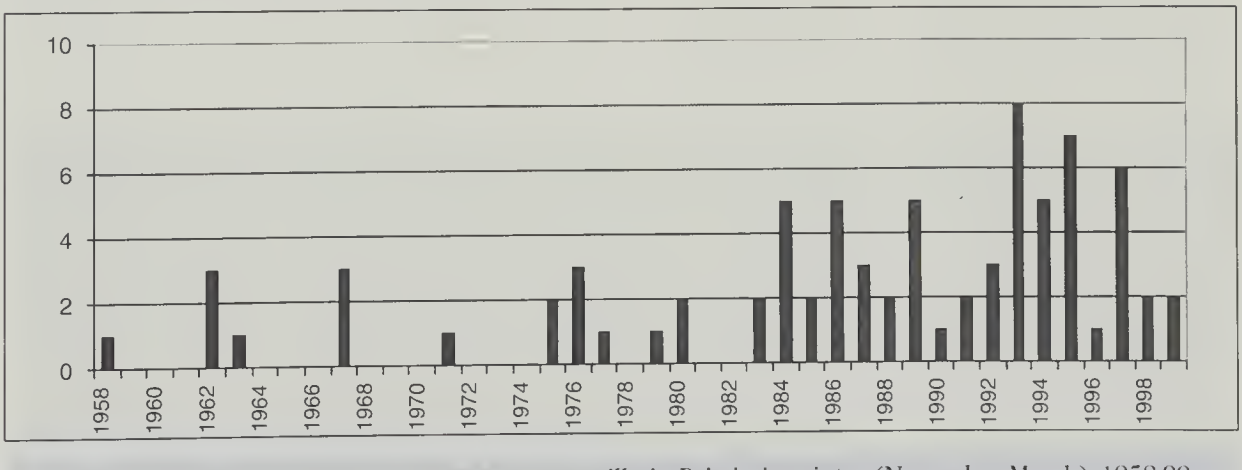


Fig. 25. Numbers of Little Buntings *Emberiza pusilla* in Britain in winter (November-March), 1958-99.

Peter A. Fraser and Michael J. Rogers, c/o 2 Churchtown Cottages, Towednack, St Ives, Cornwall TR26 3AZ

The birdwatching year 2000

Barry Nightingale and Norman Elkins

This report summarises the major bird movements and influxes of the year 2000, as well as including the rarity highlights. Unless stated otherwise, all the rarity records noted here have been accepted by the British Birds Rarities Committee (see *Brit. Birds* 94: 452-504). Irish records are adjudicated by the Irish Rare Birds Committee, and details of 2000 records from the Republic of Ireland are not yet available.

With the exception of a few Nearctic ducks, there had been relatively little at the end of 1999 to energise the rarity-hunters. A **Cattle Egret** *Bubulcus ibis* at Martin Mere (Lancashire), a **Greater Yellowlegs** *Tringa melanoleuca* in the Outer Hebrides and a **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* in Essex all remained into the New Year, as the cold weather in December gave way to a mild January throughout Britain and north-western Europe, with below-average rainfall, except in western Scotland.

At the beginning of 2000, impressive counts of **Red-throated Divers** *Gavia stellata* were made in Suffolk, with 1,985 on the sea at Aldringham Walks on 8th January, 2,680 there on 15th, and 717 at Minsmere on 16th. Numbers of **Tundra Swans** *Cygnus columbianus* reached 4,704 at Welney (Norfolk), the highest there since the winter of 1989/90. Inland passage of **Pink-footed Geese** *Anser brachyrhynchus* was noteworthy at this time, with 850 over Leicestershire and up to 5,000 over Nottinghamshire on 1st January, 325 over Leicestershire on 15th, and 500 over Regent's Park (Greater London) on 16th. In contrast, **Bean Geese** *A. fabalis* were scarce, with the majority of those in the Yare Valley (Norfolk) departing in early January. The flock in Lanarkshire continued to increase, however, and remained until at least early February; 180 were seen on 2nd. Two, or perhaps three, **Red-breasted Geese** *Branta ruficollis* appeared in Norfolk and Suffolk in January (plate 332). A record count of 16 drake **Green-winged Teals** *Anas carolinensis* was reported in Scotland during the winter, while another impressive concentration was of 21,395 **Common Scoters** *Melanitta nigra* in Carmarthen Bay during January. A trio of rare gulls appeared in early January, with a **Laughing Gull** *Larus atricilla* in Scilly on 7th, and, on 9th, a **Ross's Gull** *Rhodostethia rosea* in Shetland and an **Ivory Gull** *Pagophila eburnea* in the Outer Hebrides.

There had been widespread reports of **Bohemian Waxwings** *Bombycilla gar-*



Robin Chittenden

332. First-winter Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*, with White-fronted Geese *Anser albifrons* and Brent Geese *B. bernicta*, Holkham, Norfolk, January 2000.

© *British Birds* 94: 590-600, December 2001

rufus at the end of 1999, and about 600 were reported in January 2000. The main concentrations were in the north of England, including 55 in Sheffield (South Yorkshire), 70 in Bradford, 50 in Leeds (both West Yorkshire), and 66 in Northumberland. Farther south, a few flocks were reported in Norfolk, but generally of no more than ten individuals. The highest counts of **Horned Larks** *Eremophila alpestris* were, however, in Norfolk, with up to 50 in Holkham Bay, while across the Wash there were also 25 at Gibraltar Point (Lincolnshire). **Lapland Longspurs** *Calcarius lapponicus* were scarce, with a peak count of just three in Norfolk in January-February. Numbers were very low in Scotland, too, and the highest count reported was of 18 in Northumberland during January. **Bramblings** *Fringilla montifringilla* were also absent from many areas, while **Siskins** *Carduelis spinus* faired only slightly better.



Dave Nye

333. White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla*, Cockley Cley, Norfolk, March 2000.

February saw a continuation of the strong mild westerlies (with a lot of rain in most places), and numbers of **Smews** *Mergellus albellus* were generally lower than in recent winters, with the peak count of nine in Surrey, at Thorpe Water Park on 6th February. The influx of **Iceland Gulls** *L. glaucoides* that began in 1999 continued, perhaps in response to extremely low temperatures in southwest Greenland. During February, observers reported up to 29 in Orkney and 43 in Shetland, where the species outnumbered **Glaucous Gulls** *L. hyperboreus* by about two to one. In Ireland, there were six in Belfast (Co. Down) on 9th January, eight at Newport (Co. Mayo) on 15th, and eight at Ballina (Co. Cork) on 16th January.

A **Sora Crake** *Porzana carolina* in Devon from 18th January to 5th April was deservedly popular, as was the **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* which reappeared in Devon and Somerset in February, after last performing in Cornwall during 1999 (this record is still under consideration by the BOURC). Up to four **White-tailed Eagles** *Haliaeetus albicilla* remained in Norfolk and Suffolk during the early months of the year (plate 333), while a **Gyr Falcon** *Falco rusticolus* on Fair Isle (Shetland) during 3rd-16th February was a magnificent sight in a spectacular setting. About ten widely scattered **Rough-legged Buzzards** *Buteo lagopus* were reported during February, in what was to be a poor year for this species.

Single **Northern Wheatears** *Oenanthe oenanthe* at Portland on 25th February and at Durlston (both Dorset) on 26th were early, encouraged by the mild weather, which also explained the departure of the wintering **Tundra Swans** at Slimbridge (Gloucestershire) by 27th February. Other early arrivals in February included a **Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oedicnemus* at Chingford (Essex) on 28th and a **House Martin** *Delichon urbica* at West Runton and Mundesley, Norfolk, on 29th.

An influx of **Long-tailed Tits** *Aegithalos caudatus*, a species not normally mentioned in these reports, was noted at several observatories during March, with nine at Portland on 5th; six on Bardsey (Gwynedd), where they are rare visitors, on 11th; ten at Gibraltar Point on 11th; eight at Dungeness (Kent) and ten at Spurn (East Yorkshire), both on 12th; and eight at Landguard (Suffolk) on 13th March. In general, migrants appeared on very early dates: for example, a **Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* was seen in Norfolk on 5th March, the earliest ever in the county, while a

Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus* at Weybourne on 14th March was Norfolk's second-earliest on record, another on Bardsey on 21st March was the island's earliest ever, and two on Copeland (Co. Down) on 25th were the earliest in 46 years. High pressure close to the south of Britain for most of March may have triggered these arrivals.

Iceland Gulls were still conspicuous in the early spring, with up to eight in Norfolk until April. In Ireland, there were 60 at Poulnasherry Bay and 35 at Derry City Dump (both Co. Londonderry), 25 at Killybegs (Co. Donegal) and 30 at Kilcummin (Co. Mayo) in early March. Offshore counts included more than 100 **Black-throated Divers** *Gavia arctica* and 109 **Great Northern Divers** *G. immer* along the Cornish coast, between the Helford River and St Austell Bay, and up to 23 **Pomarine Skuas** *Stercorarius pomarinus* in Suffolk, between Dunwich and Aldeburgh, in March.

In contrast to the preceding month, April was dominated by low pressure, and it was the wettest April in England and Wales since 1756. Until the middle of the month, conditions over Britain were generally unsuitable for returning migrants, with a high frequency of northeast winds. A **Great White Egret** *Egretta alba* at Drift Reservoir (Cornwall) on 2nd April was the first of a record 25 in the year, the majority arriving in May and June (plate 334). By contrast, a **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius* at Keyhaven (Hampshire), also on 2nd April, was the only one of the year. A **Lesser Scaup** *Aythya affinis* at Rutland Water on 8th April was the second Leicestershire record, and was the first of three in April, the others being in Avon and Cambridgeshire, while a **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* at Spurn on 4th April was also the first of three in spring.

Following the early rush of summer migrants, later numbers were unimpressive, with, for example, **Willow Warblers** 'very low indeed' at Sandwich Bay (Kent). At Portland, although counts of **Blackcaps** *Sylvia atricapilla* and **Ring Ouzels** *Turdus torquatus* were higher than usual, most other species were below strength; numbers of **Willow Warblers** there reached 100 on 9th April and 400 on 14th. Similarly, at Dungeness, counts of most species, especially those of **Sand Martins**, **Common Redstarts** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus*, **Northern Wheatears**, **Common Chiffchaffs** *Phylloscopus collybita* and **Willow Warblers**, were below expectations. At Spurn, 200 **Robins** *Erithacus rubecula* moved through on 12th April, probably drifted in the strong easterlies at that time. Northward-moving fronts crossed the North Sea during 18th-



Iain H. Leach

334. Great White Egret *Egretta alba*, with Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea*, Ashleworth Ham, Gloucestershire, June 2000. The direct comparison between the two species of heron in this photograph demonstrates perfectly the size and structure of Great White Egret, factors which are not always given sufficient attention in submitted descriptions of the species (see *Brit. Birds* 94: 459).

20th, associated with southeasterlies. As a result, Fair Isle reported 350 **Robins**, 120 **Blackbirds** *Turdus merula* and 250 **Song Thrushes** *T. philomelos* on 18th April, while the next day both **Robins** and **Song Thrushes** increased to 500, accompanied by 50 **Ring Ouzels**. Indeed, it was a good spring for the last species, with, for example, about 110 passing through Norfolk, the peak day being 19th April. At Spurn, a southward passage of 250 **Linnets** *Carduelis cannabina* on 18th April was followed by a further 3,850 by 27th; the species also passed south at Gibraltar Point during the same period, but in smaller numbers. Arrivals of **Northern Wheatears** featured strongly in a period of fresh southerly winds on 20th-21st, with 220 on Fair Isle on 21st April, and 110 at Severnside (Avon) and 66 at Filey (North Yorkshire) on 22nd.



Bryan Thomas

335. Red-rumped Swallow *Hirundo daurica*, St Mary's, Scilly, May 2000.

A **Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* on 20th April was the earliest ever for Fair Isle, and was followed by four others there during May and June, with 11 altogether in Scotland during the spring. A **Sardinian Warbler** *S. melanocephala* at Roedean (East Sussex), also on 20th April, was the only one anywhere in Britain, as was a **Collared Pratincole** *Glareola pratincola* in Scilly the next day, this only the second record for the archipelago. In similar vein, a **Magpie** *Pica pica* on North Ronaldsay on 22nd April was only the third record for the island, and the first of four in Orkney in April (the 12th to 15th Orkney records). A **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* at Holme on 22nd April was the earliest ever in Norfolk, and was followed by three more in Britain in May, while two **Red-rumped Swallows** *Hirundo daurica* at Dungeness, also on 22nd April, preceded others in Devon and Northumberland before the end of the month. A **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* in Highland on 24th-25th and a **Dark-eyed Junco** *Junco hyemalis* in Caithness on 26th April were both notable Scottish records, as was a **Dartford Warbler** *Sylvia undata* on Fair Isle on 29th April, the first for Shetland and only the second for Scotland.

Even by the end of April, however, common spring migrants were still appearing in only very low numbers. Dungeness, for example, had one of its 'best' days of the spring on 26th April, with eight **Lesser Whitethroats** *Sylvia curruca*, five **Garden Warblers** *S. borin* and a single **Wood Warbler** *Phylloscopus sibilatrix*. Conditions on that day were perfect for a fall on the south coast, with southerlies and a waving front moving north over the English Channel. On Bardsey, numbers of **Turtle Doves** *Streptopelia turtur* and **flycatchers** *Muscicapa/Ficedula* were reported as well below average.

May opened with a flurry, as high pressure dominated northern Britain for the first fortnight, with light northeasterly winds over southern Britain. A **Red-rumped Swallow** over St Mary's (Scilly) on 1st (plate 335) was the first of nine in May, and there were three **Subalpine Warblers** in Cornwall, with a further 11 elsewhere during the month. A **Great Bittern** *Botaurus stellaris* on Papa Westray on 3rd May was only the third Orkney record, while the appearance of two **Slender-billed Gulls** *Larus genei* at Cley (Norfolk) on 5th was a virtual repeat of the events there in 1987. About 80 **Temminck's Stints** *Calidris temminckii* were reported in May, mostly during the first half of the month, including six in Sussex and nine at Cley. On 7th May, a good passage of **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger* through southern England was observed, with 150 at Chesil

(Dorset), 103 at Great Livermere Lake (Suffolk) and 46 at Staines Reservoir (Surrey); spring sightings of this species elsewhere, however, were more sporadic, with none at all in Scotland. On 5th May, as a northwestward-moving warm front brought air from France across the Channel, Portland had perhaps its best fall of the spring, with 750 **Common Swifts** *Apus apus*, 80 **Whinchats** *Saxicola rubetra*, 55 **Northern Wheatears**, 50 **Common Whitethroats** *Sylvia communis*, 80 **Garden Warblers**, 500 **Willow Warblers** and 75 **Spotted Flycatchers** *Muscicapa striata*, followed by 5,000 **Barn Swallows** *Hirundo rustica* and 1,500 **House Martins** on the next day. An **Alpine Accentor** *Prunella collaris* in Kent on 6th was popular, with the same or another in Suffolk on 13th May, on which day a **Calandra Lark** *Melanocorypha calandra* appeared on Fair Isle and an **Iberian Chiffchaff** *Phylloscopus brehmii* in Cornwall. On 14th, a **Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius* turned up at Pendeen (Cornwall) and a **Little Crake** *Porzana parva* at Dungeness. A **Blyth's Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus dumetorum* on Fair Isle on 15th May was the earliest ever British record, but was somewhat eclipsed by a **Zitting Cisticola** *Cisticola juncidis* which arrived at Portland on the same day. Up to 30 **European Bee-eaters** *Merops apiaster* occurred between the end of April and late July, including four together in Suffolk on 10th May.

Numbers of common migrants remained low at observatories, particularly during the second half of May, as west to northwest winds became established from 16th. At Spurn, there were very few **Common Cuckoos** *Cuculus canorus* or **Turtle Doves** (105 at Sandwich Bay on 19th was the highest count of this species received). **Willow Warblers** in particular were scarce at all the coastal watchpoints, with Walney (Cumbria) reporting 'a few only' (and no **Common Redstarts** or **Garden Warblers**), while at Dungeness the highest count was just three. On Bardsey, all migrants were scarce after mid-month, and at Portland there was barely any movement in the latter part of May. At Dungeness, the May species totals included just seven **Tree Pipits** *Anthus trivialis*, one **Common Redstart**, 13 **Whinchats**, seven **Blackcaps**, 32 **Willow Warblers** and eight **Spotted Flycatchers**.

A sprinkling of rarities enlivened late May, as winds backed into the south to southeast briefly after 25th, and small wave depressions affected southern Britain. These included an **Alpine Swift** *Tachymarptis melba* in Surrey and a **Western Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus bonelli* in Suffolk, both on 27th, when there was also the beginning of an influx of **Red-backed Shrikes** *Lanius collurio* into Scotland, with five on Fair Isle and another 31 elsewhere (but only three in England). A **Slender-billed Gull** appeared at Dungeness on 30th May, the second record for the site. On 31st May, a **Melodious Warbler** *Hippolais polyglotta* at Spurn was the first recorded there, while one trapped in Warwickshire on 3rd June was the first for that county. Colourful visitors during June included a superb **Blackpoll Warbler** *Dendroica striata* at Seaforth (Merseyside) on 2nd (after a good run of transatlantic southwesterlies), and 14 widely scattered **Rosy Starlings** *Sturnus roseus*.

In the wake of unseasonal gales in mid-June, some northern seabird colonies suffered damage, especially those exposed to the southwest. The winds were associated with active depressions passing northern Scotland during 8th-13th, with gusts in excess of 125 kph on the latter date. On Fair Isle, **Shags** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* and **Razorbills** *Alca torda* were the worst-hit, with many eggs and young lost. At Sumburgh (Shetland), some **Shags** and **Kittiwakes** *Rissa tridactyla* were washed out, but **Common Guillemots** *Uria aalge* suffered particularly badly there, with perhaps 8,000-9,000 chicks among the casualties. As a result of the same weather pattern, there were 715 **Manx Shearwaters** *Puffinus puffinus* and two **Balearic Shearwaters** *P. mauretanicus* past the Calf of Man (Isle of Man) on 13th, and 7,000 **Manx Shearwaters** per hour south past Bardsey on 16th. High pressure developed in the south during 13th-17th, and again during 24th-30th. In these calmer conditions, a **Wilson's Storm-Petrel** *Oceanites oceanicus* was seen at sea 8 km south of St Mary's on 25th June, and was the first of 32 seen up to 28th August (plate 336), mainly at sea, but including one off Pendeen on 17th August.

In a cool month, with northwesterlies predominating, July saw continued seabird movements, including 18 **Cory's Shearwaters** *Calonectris diomedea* past Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork) on 1st, approximately 10,000 **Manx Shearwaters** past Bardsey on 3rd (and again on 5th, 6th and 7th) and then 600 **Cory's Shearwaters** past Scilly on 5th, with 2,020 past Cape Clear on 16th. Welney attracted three exotic herons at this time: a **Cattle Egret** on 22nd July, and a **Little Egret** *Egretta garzetta* and a **Great White Egret** during 26th-30th. Waders were a prominent part of late July, an adult **Red-necked Stint** *Calidris ruficollis* at Pool of Virkie (Shetland) on 18th-21st being the highlight. A **White-rumped Sandpiper** *C. fuscicollis* and two **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos* were also seen at this site during the month. Farther south, 303 **Avocets** *Recurvirostra avosetta* were at Read's Island (Lincolnshire) on 23rd July.

Both Portland and Dungeness reported disappointing sea passage during August and, after the first week of the month, very few land migrants. The month was generally warm and anticyclonic, not conducive to concentrating migrants at coastal watchpoints. At Dungeness, numbers of **Tree Pipits**, **Yellow Wagtails** *Motacilla flava*, **Common Redstarts**, **Lesser Whitethroats**, **Garden Warblers**, **Spotted Flycatchers** and **Pied Flycatchers** *Ficedula hypoleuca* were low. On Bardsey, only a tenth of the typical numbers of **Willow Warblers** were seen. August rarities were, typically, a mixed bag, and included a **Swinhoe's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma monorbis* at Cove (Northeast Scotland), a **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* in Cumbria, **White-rumped Sandpipers** in Kent and East Yorkshire, all on 5th, a **Chimney Swift** *Chaetura pelagica* at Spurn on 6th, and a **Baird's Sandpiper** *Calidris bairdii* in Devon on 8th. Worthy counts of our more regular waders included 400 **Avocets** at Ongar Hill and 519 at Breydon Water (both Norfolk), plus 1,800 **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* at Ongar Hill, all on 6th August. Sea passage during mid-August included 115 **Cory's Shearwaters** past Scilly and 2,020 **Sandwich Terns** *Sterna sandvicensis* and 6,700 **Common/Arctic Terns** *Sterna hirundo/S. paradisaea* south past Spurn, all



Bryan Thomas

336. Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, about 5 km SW of Bishop Rock, Scilly, July 2000.

on 14th, with 2,200 **Sandwich Terns** and 4,300 **Common/Arctic Terns** passing south at the latter site on 16th. A **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* on Fair Isle on 14th August was followed by another six in Shetland during August and September, while 250 **Northern Wheatears** on Fair Isle on 15th were the vanguard of an excellent autumn for this species. Still on Fair Isle, a **Greenish Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochiloides* on 19th August was followed by two more on the island, and seven elsewhere, by the end of the month. On 26th August, migrants at Filey included 29 **Whinchats** and an **Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana*, while a strong passage of **Yellow Wagtails** included 100 at Holme on 26th and 500 at Sandwich Bay on 27th, as high pressure was replaced by southeasterlies ahead of a slow-moving front along the east coast. A **Sharp-tailed Sandpiper** *Calidris acuminata* at Pool of Virkie on 27th August consolidated Shetland's impressive early autumn. The month ended with another movement of **Cory's Shearwaters**, 600 past Porthgwarra (Cornwall) and 400 past St Mary's on 29th, with one past Gibraltar Point on 30th being the first for the reserve.

In northern Britain and northern Europe, September was characterised by periods of east to southeast winds, mainly during 19th-27th. A **Lanceolated Warbler** *Locustella lanceolata* on Out Skerries (Shetland) on 1st was the earliest ever in Britain, and was followed by four others on Fair Isle during Sep-



Michael McKee

337. First-winter Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor*. Quendale, Shetland, September 2000.



Michael McKee

338. First-winter Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*, Out Skerries, Shetland, September 2000. First-winter Black-headed Buntings can be extremely difficult, perhaps sometimes impossible, to separate from the closely similar Red-headed Bunting *E. bruniceps*. This photo illustrates two of the more useful characters. First, the primary projection is rather long, almost two-thirds the length of the exposed tertials; in the field, close views showed five primary tips beyond the longest tertial, with the sixth falling level (Red-headed would show slightly shorter wings). Second, the forecrown is marked with distinct, fine blackish streaks (Red-headed is typically more faintly marked). The large, long, conical bill is a further, tentative, pointer to Black-headed, while the warm colour of the rump (with distinct orange- or rufous-brown tones, contrasting with the sandy-grey back), usually visible only in flight, was the third key feature pointing to Black-headed.

tember. Indeed, even by its own standards, Shetland had a memorable September: additional records to those already mentioned included a **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media*, three **Olive-backed Pipits** *Anthus hodgsoni*, a **Red-throated Pipit**, a **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka*, four **Booted Warblers** *Hippolais caligata*, a **Subalpine Warbler**, three **Greenish Warblers**, two **Arctic Warblers** *Phylloscopus borealis*, two **Dusky Warblers** *P. fuscatus*, and single **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* (plate 337), **Rustic Bunting**, **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola*, **Black-headed Bunting** *E. melanocephala* (plate 338) and **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*.

Of the scarce migrants, about 100 **Wrynecks** *Jynx torquilla* were seen throughout Britain in September, along with fewer than 15 **Bluethroats** *Luscinia svecica* and only about 35 **Icterine Warblers** *Hippolais icterina* and 40 **Barred Warblers** *Sylvia nisoria*, which represents a very poor autumn for the last three species. Numbers of 'common' passerine migrants were again low, and Spurn reported its lowest September ringing total ever. In contrast, 800 **Black-tailed Godwits** roosted at Breydon Water and 2,100 at Snettisham (both Norfolk) on 5th September, the latter being the highest ever count at that site, while 20 **Little Egrets** were recorded in Scilly, also a record count there.

Notwithstanding the dearth of many small migrants, a large movement of hirundines and pipits was observed throughout the country in September, a virtual repeat of events in 1999. At Sandwich Bay, 548 **Sand Martins**, 15,000 **Barn Swallows** and 3,000 **House Martins** moved through on 4th, while on 12th September 6,000 **Barn Swallows** and 8,000 **House Martins** passed south over Spurn and 4,460 **Barn Swallows** and 1,168 **House Martins** were logged at Gibraltar Point, with 8,000 **Barn Swallows** at Portland on 13th and 4,300 over Sandwich Bay on 17th. Inland, 1,058 **Barn Swallows**

flew south over Rod Moor (South Yorkshire) on 16th September, with 1,700 **House Martins** there on 21st. Between 7th and 27th September, over 35,000 **Meadow Pipits** *Anthus pratensis* moved south at Spurn, with peaks of 5,500 on 12th and 6,000 on 17th; a 'large passage' of this species was noted in Northumberland during 8th-10th September, while 4,340 flew southwest across Fife on 10th. At Gibraltar Point, 10,425 **Meadow Pipits** were recorded during 12th-17th September, and in Surrey 500 were noted in one flock on 17th. A series of visible-migration watches at Rod Moor between 10th September and 15th November logged nearly 20,000 **Meadow Pipits** passing over in a southerly direction. Most of these diurnal movements took place in light airflows, occasionally accompanied by weak fronts.

Strong westerlies associated with a very deep depression north of the Faroes, during 7th-8th September, pushed many seabirds from the Atlantic into the North Sea on a narrow front, and counts at Orkney on 9th included **Fulmars** *Fulmarus glacialis* passing at a rate of 2,000 per hour, **Northern Gannets** *Morus bassanus* at 300 per hour and **Sooty Shearwaters** *Puffinus griseus* at 40 per hour. At Kilcummin Head, 4,500 **Sooty Shearwaters** were recorded on 6th September, while on Cape Clear Island there were 400 **Cory's Shearwaters** on 10th and 5,388 **Great Shearwaters** *P. gravis* on 11th.

Just a handful of **European Honey-buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* was reported in Britain during 13th-19th September, giving no indication of the events to come. With the onset of southeasterlies, and a succession of fronts moving into the North Sea between 20th September and early October, there was a remarkable influx of this species, with many counties having to rewrite their record books. Estimates of the total numbers involved range from 500 to perhaps as many as 800 individuals. Counts in coastal counties focused on the well-known migration points, and included, for example, 110 passing Beachy Head (East Sussex) during the period (63 on 30th September alone), and 25 at Gibraltar Point and 15 at Spurn on 20th September; at Portland, 56 were logged during 23rd-30th, with 37 on the last date. Considerable numbers were seen inland, too, as instanced by 64 passing through Nottinghamshire between 21st September and 1st October, while counts in neighbouring Leicestershire included 18 near Loughborough on 22nd and 25 at Twyeross on 25th; 29 were counted in the Sheffield area between 22nd September and 1st October, and 76 in Surrey between 21st September and 6th October. More than 70 were reported in Norfolk, including 27 on 20th alone; 98 were reported in Lincolnshire, where only 80 had been recorded before 1998, and no fewer than 42 passed over Abberton Reservoir (Essex) during 22nd-23rd September. Connected with this exceptional movement were other raptors, particularly **Marsh Harriers** *Circus aeruginosus*, **Common Buzzards** *Buteo buteo*, **Ospreys** *Pandion haliaetus*, **Common Kestrels** *Falco tinnunculus* and **Hobbies** *F. subbuteo*. Surrey, for example, reported its best autumn ever for Hobbies, while a passage of more than 40 of that species in Nottinghamshire contrasts with the typical count for the same period of three or four. Raptors at Dungeness on 24th September included four **Marsh Harriers**, an **Osprey**, five **Merlins** *F. columbarius* and three **Hobbies**. At Spurn, 95 **Common Kestrels** were logged on 28th September, the second-highest day-count for this species there since 1945.

Meanwhile, autumn passage was still in full swing in northern Britain. On North Ronaldsay, a good fall of common migrants on 20th September was accompanied by a **Marsh Warbler** *Acrocephalus palustris* and a **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla*. A **Rustic Bunting** arrived on St Kilda (Outer Hebrides) on the same day, with another there on 25th September. On Fair Isle, a fall on 21st included 250 **Blackcaps**, while a **Citrine Wagtail** and a **Southern Grey Shrike** *Lanius meridionalis* both appeared in Orkney on 22nd. Farther south, good numbers of **Barn Swallows** were still moving southwards, with 12,000 at Dungeness on 23rd September and 8,000 on 26th. At Frampton (Avon), a roost of **Barn Swallows** was estimated at 20,000 individuals on 22nd, while 3,000 of this hirundine passed

through Portland on 23rd, together with 10,000 **House Martins**. **Siskins** began to arrive in force on 24th September, with 360 on Fair Isle and 148 on North Ronaldsay, while 477 flew over Rod Moor on 29th. At Holme, 100 **Common Redstarts** on 24th were noteworthy, and 4,800 **Barn Swallows** and 1,100 **House Martins** passed through Sandwich Bay on 25th. A considerable arrival of migrants along the east coast of England on 26th included 90 **Northern Wheatears** and 170 **Willow Warblers** at Filey, 145 **Northern Wheatears** and 15 **Ring Ouzels** at Spurn, and 25 **Common Redstarts**, together with a **Citrine Wagtail**, on the Farne Islands (Northumberland). The same day marked the start of a remarkable influx of **Radde's Warblers** *Phylloscopus schwarzi*, with one in Northeast Scotland on 26th, a total of five on 30th September, 12 on 1st October, two on 2nd and another ten during 12th-25th October. No fewer than eight of these were at Spurn between 30th September and 1st October. **Red-eyed Vireos** *Vireo olivaceus* also arrived in strength, with four in Cornwall and Scilly during 27th-28th September, as transatlantic southwesterlies reached Britain, and another in Scilly on 1st October. Also from the west, a **Cliff Swallow** *Hirundo pyrrhonota* appeared in Scilly on 28th September, and another reached Portland on the next day. In Orkney, 300 **Snow Buntings** *Plectrophenax nivalis* gathered on North Ronaldsay, but much rarer visitors there included a **Firecrest** *Regulus ignicapillus* on Papa Westray, only the eighth for Orkney, and a **Melodious Warbler** on Holm on 29th, another Northern Isles rarity. **Meadow Pipits** continued to move south, with 1,954 at Landguard and 5,500 at Walney on 29th September and 6,250 at the latter site on 30th. During the month there were about 150 **Yellow-browed Warblers** *Phylloscopus inornatus*, mostly in the last week, and including five at Spurn on 30th; and, in a better-than-average year, about 35 **Little Buntings** were discovered in September, with no fewer than five on Out Skerries on 23rd.

October was another very wet month, with successive depressions close to Britain giving unsettled weather. These brought spells of southeasterlies in the north, and strong westerlies across the Atlantic. Among a number of impressive concentrations of birds on 1st October were 2,000 **Blackcaps** at Sandwich Bay, 538 **Snow Buntings** on North Ronaldsay and 95 **Little Grebes** *Tachybaptus ruficollis* at Holme Pierrepont (Nottinghamshire), the last being one of the most important sites in Britain for the species. On Fair Isle, 450 **Robins**, 300 **Bramblings** and 40 **Common Redstarts** were counted on 2nd, while at Sandwich Bay on the same day 10,000 **Barn Swallows** and 7,000 **House Martins** passed through in a late surge. There were about 125 **Yellow-browed Warblers** and 50 **Richard's Pipits** *Anthus novaeseelandiae* in October, but only three **Icterine Warblers**, five **Bluethroats** and 14 **Pallas's Leaf Warblers** *Phylloscopus proregulus*, the last three species all well below normal strength. Nearctic waders included a **Baird's Sandpiper** in Gwent on 3rd October and a **White-**



Dave Nye

339. Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*, Cot Valley, Cornwall, October 2000.

rumped Sandpiper on St Kilda on 5th, and there were to be another eight new arrivals of the latter species throughout Britain during October. Three **Red-eyed Vireos** arrived on 5th, in Cornwall (plate 339), Devon and Scilly, and an **Arctic Warbler** in Scilly on 6th was followed by another, at Spurn, on 7th (plate 340). Of the 29 **American Wigeons** *Anas americana* which appeared in 2000, a party of ten was found at the tiny Loch of Hillwell (Shetland) on 9th October, some staying to the end of the year. New arrivals on 12th October included a **Pacific Golden Plover** on Tiree (Argyll), a **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** *Coccyzus americanus* at St Levan (Cornwall) and two **Swainson's Thrushes** *Catharus ustulatus*, one each in Scilly and Shetland (plate 341). Another **Red-eyed Vireo**, on Gugh (Scilly) on 15th October, was somewhat overshadowed by a **Spectacled Warbler** *Sylvia conspicillata* on nearby Tresco. Yet more **Red-eyed Vireos** were found, one in Cornwall on 18th October and another, away from the southwest at last, in the Outer Hebrides on 21st. Impressive numbers of **Little Gulls** *Larus minutus* moved along the English east coast in the second half of October, including 1,400 past Spurn on 18th, and 283 past Sea Palling and 524 past Horsey Gap (both Norfolk) on 22nd. On Fair Isle, attention was diverted from a fall of 200 **Blackcaps** by a **Brown Shrike** *Lanius cristatus* on 21st October, only the second British record. On the same day, 50,000 **Common Starlings** *Sturnus vulgaris* moved west at Holme, with 40,000 on 22nd, while 35,000 flew west at Paston (Norfolk) on 21st. Sizeable arrivals of **Redwings** *Turdus iliacus* were reported, including 6,000 at Landguard on 22nd October (together with 14 **Ring Ouzels**) and, on 23rd, 13,500 on Fair Isle, 2,900 on North Ronaldsay and 7,500 on the Farne Islands, with 11,000 at the last site on 27th. A **Sociable Lapwing** *Vanellus gregarius* at Minsmere on 22nd October drew the crowds, but a **Siberian Blue Robin** *Lus-*



Mike Ashforth

340. Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis*, Kilnsea, East Yorkshire, October 2000.



Mike McDonnell

341. Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2000.



Gary Bellingham

342. Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*, Flamborough, East Yorkshire, November 2000.

ciuia cyane there on the next day, potentially the first for Britain, would have been the highlight of the year for the gathered hordes had it stayed (the record remains under consideration).

November prolonged the record wet autumn, with depression tracks even farther south than in October. The month began with an **Olive-backed Pipit** on Scilly on 1st, the first of five in Britain during the month, while a **Desert Wheatear** *Oenanthe deserti* at Holme on 2nd and another in Cleveland on 12th provided a typical late show. Thrush arrivals continued, with strong passage observed at both Spurn and Filey, and on 6th-7th, in a spell of very wet and strong north to northeast winds, 'many thousands of **Redwings** and hundreds of **Fieldfares** *Turdus pilaris*' reached Scilly. The passage of **Little Gulls** continued along the Norfolk coast all month and peaked on 7th, with 2,687 past Mundesley and 1,400 past Sheringham. An **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* at Flamborough (East Yorkshire) on 8th was followed by another, at Whitley Bay (Northumberland), on 9th, on the same day as a magnificent **Pine Grosbeak** *Pinicola enucleator* in Shetland. Appearing on the mainland after an absence of over 30 years, a **Steller's Eider** *Polysticta stelleri* at Hopeman (Moray & Nairn) during 16th-18th November was widely appreciated. About 60 **Pallas's Leaf Warblers** were found in November, including five at Filey on 9th, and seven **Hume's Warblers** *Phylloscopus humei* (plate 342), while a **Pied Wheatear** at Gibraltar Point on 18th was the first for Lincolnshire. A **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* at Deerness (Orkney) from 18th to 21st November was unexpectedly late, although it matched late records of many species of summer migrant, including flycatchers, chats and warblers.

By contrast, in a mild December dominated by southwesterlies, many winter visitors were scarce. There were, for example, only two records of **Lapland Longspur** in Norfolk during the whole of December, while **Snow Buntings** were also hard to find in many of their usual haunts. Counts of wintering waterfowl and seabirds in Scapa Flow (Orkney) confirmed what an important site this is, with up to 82 **Red-throated Divers**, 58 **Black-throated Divers**, 438 **Great Northern Divers**, 74 **Slavonian Grebes** *Podiceps auritus*, ten **Red-necked Grebes** *P. grisegena*, 1,184 **Long-tailed Ducks** *Clangula hyemalis* and 612 **Black Guillemots** *Cepphus grylle* in the tally. In Norfolk, similarly notable counts during December included 400 **Red-throated Divers** at Winterton, and 600 **Little Gulls** past Hunstanton on 3rd. There were 16,490 **Pink-footed Geese** at Snettisham on 4th, and 18,000 at Egmere (Norfolk) on 26th, a real Boxing Day treat for someone. The year ended, much as it had begun, with numbers of **Bohemian Waxwings** steadily building up; counts of up to 85 in Norfolk, 60 in East Yorkshire and 50 in North Yorkshire were part of a total of perhaps 300 throughout Britain.

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Notes

Lame Herring Gull given foraging assistance by presumed mate

On 26th November 1997, at Percy Park, Tynemouth, Northumberland, I watched a flock of Herring Gulls *Larus argentatus* which were feeding by foot-pattering. All the gulls seemed to keep a reasonable distance from each other with the exception of two, which I assumed were a pair (one, presumed to be the female, was approximately 10% larger than the other). *BWP* (Vol. 3) states that, in flocks, Herring Gulls usually maintain an individual distance of at least 0.3 m.

Closer observation revealed that the female was lame, with the right knee-joint bent outwards and incapable of foot-pattering. The male allowed his mate to take every third or fourth prey item which his foot-pattering produced, and showed no aggression, nor any attempt to prevent the prey being taken. This behaviour was repeated for the next two weeks, and the pair always seemed to feed in the same area of grass each day.

BWP (Vol. 3) states that established pair-members often consort during the winter, but that courtship feeding is rare at this time. It seemed to me even more astonishing that, in this case, the male, rather than feeding his mate, appeared to attract prey in a manner not available to the lame bird, and then allowed the female to take the prey items as if her own actions had been responsible for their becoming available.

M. S. Kitching
18 Frances Ville, Scotland Gate, Choppington, Northumberland, NE62 5ST

European Nightjar using swimming pool

In August 1998, at Sa Roca, Menorca, in the Balearic Islands, I was on holiday at a villa with its own swimming pool. The pool was lit between 21.15 and 23.15 hours, but even before that time, as the light faded, it attracted early-flying moths and other insects. These would often struggle in the water, sending out a series of ripples, before drowning.

On several evenings, a European Nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus* was observed in the area at dusk. On one occasion, before the pool lights came on, it made several low passes across the pool; these culminated in a dramatic stall and swoop down to the water surface, where it removed a large moth which I had noticed struggling on the surface a few minutes before. The nightjar undoubtedly hit the water, but regained the air with no difficulty at all.

The night in question was perfectly still and clear, with the pool acting like a mirror to reflect the night sky. The nightjar was not seen after the pool lights were switched on, and this was the only evening on which I observed it hunting in this manner.

Stephen M. Root
21 Aspin Park Drive, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire HG5 8EY

EDITORIAL COMMENT Colin Bibby commented that 'The Pan-African Ornithological Conference in Ghana in 2000 was entertained by Long-tailed Nightjars *Caprimulgus climacurus* feeding over a lit swimming pool – wonderful!'

European Bee-eater possibly taking small bird

On 28th February 1999, in Borrowdale, Harare, Zimbabwe, a small flock of European Bee-eaters *Merops apiaster* was feeding near my house, occasionally perching on overhead wires above a tall hedge. Suddenly, one dropped down to the hedge, caught something, and returned to its perch. I paid little attention to what it had caught, although it did seem quite large. The bee-eater dealt quickly with the item in the usual way, and then swallowed it. Then, to my astonishment, four or five small, downy feathers drifted slowly to the ground near me. I could not identify the species to which they belonged,

but one was still partially in pin, suggesting that it may have come from a fledgling.

A close search of the hedge revealed no sign of other fledglings: the only other small birds in the vicinity were Bronze Mannikins *Spermestes cucullatus*, several pairs of which were nesting in the garden, although none had fledged. It is most unfortunate that I did not observe the prey item before it was swallowed.

M. P. S. Irwin
P.O. Box BW 122, Borrowdale, Harare, Zimbabwe

EDITORIAL COMMENT Although the incident described by M. P. S. Irwin cannot, sadly, confirm that the European Bee-eater did take a small passerine, we feel that it is worth drawing attention to the observation in the hope that someone may be able to provide more certain evidence of a similar event. So far as we are aware, there are no documented cases of any species of bee-eater preying on other birds.

Wren foraging in the canopy in autumn

On 5th November 1995, at St Margaret's Bay, Kent, I noticed a Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* moving through the foliage of a Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*. It was foraging actively among the leaves, occasionally catching and eating small invertebrates. I watched it for several minutes, during which time it ranged between approximately 10 m and 15 m above ground level, before it flew across to an adjacent Sycamore, and entered the canopy about 8 m up. Armstrong (1955, *The Wren*) stated that Wrens normally feed within 2 m of the ground, lower in winter, while *BWP* (Vol. 5) mentions canopy-feeding in Europe in spring, and also the taking of insects in flight. Canopy-feeding appears to be uncommon in late autumn.

Norman McCanch
23 New Street, Ash, Canterbury, Kent CT3 2BH

EDITORIAL COMMENT Although unusual, this perhaps simply reflects the adaptability of a successful species, or possibly the response of a newly arrived migrant faced with a patch of trees with little understorey.

Density-dependent winter song of Common Chiffchaff

On several sunny days during December 1998, in an area close to Bedford sewage-treatment works, Bedfordshire, I heard a Common Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita* singing strongly, and for quite long periods. On one occasion, two individuals were singing. There are a few records of Common Chiffchaffs singing in winter in Devon and Cornwall, while Eric Simms (1985, *British Warblers*) noted that many of the 50 or more recorded in Falmouth from December 1940 to February 1941 were in full song.

Although I have recorded one or two Common Chiffchaffs wintering in this area in most years, I have never before heard them singing, even on sunny days. In December 1998, the number of wintering individuals was, however, much higher than usual, with at least eight in the area, and up to five observed in a single bush on one occasion. It seemed to me that a combination of the sunshine and the number of chiffchaffs in close proximity to each other stimulated the song. Air temperature did not appear to play any significant role, since on two days it was no higher than 3°C.

David Kramer
7 Little Headlands, Putnoe, Bedford MK41 8JT

EDITORIAL COMMENT Another instance of a Common Chiffchaff singing repeatedly in winter was reported in 1948, at Newton Ferrers, Devon (*Brit. Birds* 41: 309), when up to three individuals were seen in the same garden.

Aberrant song of Common Chaffinch

On 8th April 1999, at West Bagborough, Somerset, I heard repeated, trilling song phrases from a bird hidden in a Yew *Taxus baccata* in the churchyard. These trills had the quality of the song of a Greenfinch *Carduelis chloris*, and I assumed that the songster was a male of that species. On the following day, I heard a very similar song in exactly the same place, and on this occasion I observed the singing bird. To my surprise, it was a male Common Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, which continued to utter Greenfinch-like, musical and twittering trills; there was no terminal flourish. The bird continued to sing for another three minutes.

Unfortunately, this individual either disappeared from the area or reverted to a normal song, so that it was not possible to obtain a sound-recording of this unusual vocalisation. *BWP* (Vol. 8) does not mention Greenfinch-type trilling in the composition of the Common Chaffinch's song, although there are previous records of this species giving songs like that of European Nuthatch *Sitta europaea* (*Brit. Birds* 84: 224-225).

Dr A. P. Radford
Crossways Cottage, West Bagborough, Taunton, Somerset TA4 3EG

Letter

How do House Martins transport and fix mud?

When watching House Martins *Delichon urbica* in 1967, I wrote in my notebook: 'Is the mud for the structure of their nests carried *on*, rather than *in*, their beaks?'. My impression then was that the birds carried up the mud on the beak, and pressed it into the outer fabric of the nest with a sort of rapid nodding movement. A similar movement was noted as long ago as 1773 by Gilbert White (letter to the Hon. Daines Barrington, 20th November 1773): 'When they fix their materials they plaster them on with their chins, moving their heads with a quick vibratory motion'.

So, which is right? Do House Martins carry mud in or on their beak, and do they fix it with their forehead or their chin? I feel sure that, with modern technology, someone must know.

K. G. Spencer
167 Manchester Road, Burnley, Lancashire BB11 4HR

EDITORIAL COMMENT Angela Turner and David Bryant have jointly commented as follows: 'The usual method for almost all mud-nest-building hirundines (there are two exceptions in Africa, involving species which mix mud and grass) is to collect a pellet of mud *in* the bill and to mould it into the nest with the bill by vibrating the head and bill. They do not use the chin, but may possibly use the forehead as a "tamping device". Hirundines are, however, frequently observed with mud *on* the bill as well as within it, and in the case of both House Martins and Barn Swallows *Hirundo rustica*, at least, that on the bill appears to be more liquid. Mike Hansell, in his book *Bird Nests and Construction Behaviour* (2000), suggests that, when the pellet is added to the nest, the wetter mud on the bill "forms a bridge between the two, avoiding cracks developing when the nest dries". He also suggests that vibrating the bill causes the mud partially to liquefy, and to disperse more evenly, thereby allowing the mud to fill in any small air pockets which would otherwise weaken the structure. A similar explanation was put forward some time ago by Robert Spencer (*Brit. Birds* 70: 305). There is, however, still some doubt about the relative amounts and types of mud transported in and on the bill by House Martins, and the comparative frequency of mud type and carrying method, and any video evidence of this behaviour would be very interesting.'

Monthly Marathon



Richard Chandler

343. Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himantopus*, Texas, USA, April 1994.

The head and bill are a comparatively small part of a bird's body, yet it is in that very region that birdwatchers so often find a disproportionate number of clues to correct identification. Naming the species portrayed in Monthly Marathon photo number 181 (plate 247, repeated here as plate 343) would doubtless be quite straightforward if the entire head was not submerged. That we are dealing with a species of wader is reasonably obvious. Beyond that, the visible plumage does not show any immediately striking features; it is basically white below, with diffuse streaks along the flanks, and fairly uniformly patterned above. A closer look at those uniform upperparts suggests that it is in winter rather than juvenile plumage. At first glance, the dark-centred wing-coverts and tertials with noticeably pale edges, and a quite heavily streaked neck and upper breast, appear to be perhaps the only features of note.

The wader is almost belly-deep in water, so that we can see barely anything of the legs. The little that we can see is, however, worth a closer look. First, the legs have colour, being perhaps green or yellow; they are not black. Secondly, although we can see only a minute part of the legs, the apparent depth to which the head and neck are immersed suggests that there is a good deal more leg below the water surface. If so, that would rule out two species with plain greyish upperparts superficially similar to our bird, Great Knot *Calidris tenuirostris* and Red Knot *C. canutus*.

A wader with long greenish or yellowish legs, fairly plain, greyish upperparts and a streaked neck might suggest a number of possibilities, including Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*, Greenshank *T. nebularia*, Greater Yellowlegs *T. melanoleuca*, Lesser Yellowlegs *T. flavipes* and Wood Sandpiper *T. glareola*. The two species of yellowlegs can perhaps be discounted straight away, since they have quite prominent pale spots and notches on the wing-coverts and tertial edges, producing a distinctive pattern that does not fit our mystery bird. Similarly, the absence of spotting eliminates Wood Sandpiper, which would also show much browner, less grey, upperparts. The wing-covert pattern does not look quite right for Marsh Sandpiper or Greenshank, either. For all five members of the genus *Tringa* that we have discussed so far, the flank markings also do not fit those of an individual in winter plumage.

As is so often the case with mystery photographs, we have to assemble all these snippets of information, and try to create the wider picture. We appear to have a wader with long, greenish-yellow legs, fairly uniform grey upperparts and scapulars, pale-edged and dark-centred wing-coverts and tertials, and white underparts sporting diffuse flank streaks. In combination, these point to just one species, Stilt Sandpiper *Micropalama himan-*



344. 'Monthly Marathon'. Photo no. 184. Thirty-second stage in eleventh 'Marathon' or first stage in twelfth. Identify the species. Read the rules (see page 55), then send in your answer *on a postcard* to Monthly Marathon, c/o The Banks, Mountfield, Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY, *or by e-mail* to editor@britishbirds.co.uk, *to arrive by 31st January 2002*.

topus, a wader which, just like our mystery bird, is frequently seen wading in deep water. This individual was photographed by Richard Chandler in Texas, USA, in April 1994.

Once again, most entrants in this round reached the correct solution, with 75% voting for Stilt Sandpiper. Of the rest, 10% opted for Great Knot, and a similar number also for Red Knot, while there was also a single vote for Marsh Sandpiper. The leading contestants emerged unscathed from another round. Peter Lansdown, Andy Mears and Peter Sunesen remain the leaders of this competition, each now with a sequence of 16 correct answers, while Jon Holt has a sequence of 15 correct answers. Behind this familiar leading pack comes Lou Cross with 11 correct answers, followed by Richard Patient with seven.

Steve Rooke

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Looking back

Seventy-five years ago:

[From 'Reviews: *The Gulls (Laridae) of the World; their plumages, moults, variations, relationships and distribution.* By Jonathon Dwight'] 'The Herring [*Larus argentatus*] and Lesser Black-backed Gulls [*L. fuscus*] are undoubtedly the most difficult taxonomically and agreement regarding their relationships has not yet been reached. Dr. Dwight considers *Larus cachinnans* as a distinct species. On account chiefly of its yellow legs he will not unite it specifically with *argentatus*, although *vegae* is said to have sometimes legs of a yellowish-flesh. Nor does he recognize the western Mediterranean form of this bird, *michahellesii*, though he admits that it approaches his *atlantis*, which he considers a form of *Larus fuscus* and we a form of *argentatus*. Nor does he admit *Larus fuscus intermedius*, which Mr Schiöler has proposed for the Norwegian, as opposed to the Swedish, Lesser Black-backed Gull. As regards the North American Herring-Gulls, Dr. Dwight distinguishes *smithsonianus* for the more southern breeding bird and *thayeri* for the more northern. *Larus kumlieni* he thinks is a hybrid between the Herring-Gull (*thayeri*) and the Iceland Gull [*L. glaucoides*].

'Dr. Dwight is much to be congratulated on having accomplished a sound and useful piece of work for which the student of Gulls will always be grateful.—H.F.W.' (*Brit. Birds* 20: 183-184, December 1926)

Twenty-five years ago:

'**Birds new to science** "News and comment" for October 1974 (*Brit. Birds*, 67: 444-447) included an item on bird species new to science discovered in recent years. Only three of these were from the Palearctic region: a gull *Larus relictus* from Kazakhstan, a nightjar *Caprimulgus centralasicus* from north-west China and a grasshopper warbler *Locustella amnicola* from east Siberia. Now a fourth can be added, and from an area much nearer home. In the current issue of *Alauda* (44: 351-352), Jacques Vielliard has named and described a new nuthatch, *Sitta ledanti*, discovered last July on the Djebel Babor, northern Algeria; this lies in the Petite Kabylie Mountains of Constantine province, which are between the Gulf of Bougie and the town of Setif. The Kabylie Nuthatch, as it has been dubbed, rather resembles Krüper's Nuthatch *S. krueperi* of Turkey and the Caucasus, but has the underparts uniformly washed with beige, and also has a distinctive song. Further, juveniles have the black crown of adult plumage, a feature lacking in juveniles of *S. krueperi* and its other upland relative, the Corsican Nuthatch *S. whiteheadi*. This newly discovered nuthatch must be very rare and local to have evaded detection for so long in a comparatively well-worked country. Monsieur Vielliard considers it a relict population that may not exceed a dozen pairs, and, if he is right, this must be one of the rarest passerines in the world. Fortunately, access to the Djebel Babor is difficult and strictly regulated, so that appropriate conservation measures can be imposed.' (*Brit. Birds* 69: 520, December 1976)

News and comment

Compiled by Bob Scott and Adrian Pitches

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of *British Birds*

Marine Wildlife Conservation Bill

The Marine Wildlife Conservation Bill, sponsored by the RSPB, and presented by John Randall, MP for Uxbridge, has come top of the list of Private Members' Bills to be presented in the House of Commons this term. In other words, it stands an excellent chance of becoming law. The Bill aims to extend the same protection to marine wildlife that is now enjoyed by terrestrial flora and fauna, particularly since the Countryside and Rights of Way Act came into force, in January 2001. It would apply to England and Wales, and would give enforcement powers to competent marine authorities, such as coastguards, specialist Customs and Excise officers and fisheries bodies.

The Bill is designed to protect marine wildlife from pollution and over-exploitation, and will benefit many sites which, even though they may be of international importance for the wildlife which they support, are currently unprotected. There has, crucially, been little opposition from Britain's fishing communities, who see this as a conservation measure which will help to promote sustainable exploitation of fish stocks and the preservation of them. MPs of all parties spoke in support of the Bill, but it cannot become law without Government backing, and legislative time. We shall report further on the progress of the Bill in due course.

Damar Flycatcher rediscovered

BirdLife International marked the opening of the fifth World Bird Festival recently by announcing the rediscovery of the Damar Flycatcher *Ficedula henrici*, an Indonesian island endemic last seen in the nineteenth century. The species was rediscovered in September 2001, during a survey of Damar Island, northeast of Timor, in southern Maluku Province, conducted for the BirdLife Indonesia Programme by Colin Trainor. The survey reports that the flycatcher occurs in relatively high densities at the sites visited, suggesting that it may, in fact, be relatively abundant on the island.

A photograph of the bird, and more information, appears on the BirdLife website (www.birdlife.net) in the News section. This site contains updates from around the world, including the discovery, rediscovery or taxonomic splitting of a further 15 species in this year alone.

Bert Axell

On 12th November 2001, just a few days after the death of his wife, Joan, Herbert E. Axell died in hospital in Suffolk. Bert will be remembered by a whole generation of young birdwatchers as warden of Dungeness Bird Observatory and, subsequently, the RSPB's reserve at Minsmere. Members of the 'Junior Bird Recorders Club' in the 1950s will doubtless recall vividly the ringing courses at Dungeness, and Bert's military precision when it came to driving Heligoland traps in the days before mistnets. At Minsmere, the famous scrape will be Bert's lasting memorial, while his attitude to the very first generation of twitchers earned him the nickname 'hubcap' (always at the extreme end of the axle). In later years, Bert transferred his amazing knowledge of habitat creation to the international scene, and sites in Spain and Malta benefited from his expertise. It may be a cliche, but the passing of Bert Axell signifies the end of an era: he was one of the pioneers of habitat management for bird conservation. We offer our sympathies to his son, Roderick. (*Contributed by Bob Scott*)

• A full obituary will appear shortly in *British Birds*.

BB *consultant scoops top award*

One of *British Birds*' photographic consultants, David Tipling, has won the 'story award' of the European Nature Photographer of the Year competition. David's winning entry comprised six pictures of life at an Emperor Penguin *Aptenodytes forsteri* rookery, taken during a recent expedition to Antarctica. David was also highly commended in this year's BG Wildlife Photographer of the Year award, in the bird-behaviour category, for an image of an Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* exploding out of the water, clutching a fish. This image will form part of a Photospot feature in *BB* in the near future. We offer David our warmest congratulations.

Soaraway success of Yorkshire Red Kites

The success of the Yorkshire Red Kite *Milvus milvus* restoration project continues. In 2001, just two years after the first young kites were reintroduced on the Harewood Estate, near Harrogate, eight pairs nested, producing 14 young. It has also emerged that one of the male kites released in 1999, known as 'Tag 12', has already become a 'grandfather' at the age of two years. Tag 12 paired up with a female in 2000, when the pair reared two chicks. That marked the first successful nesting by kites in Yorkshire for more than a century. In 2001, son of Tag 12 found a mate, and the pair successfully raised one chick. To date, 12 young Red Kites have been released. The immediate success of the project was unexpected, and the organisations behind it (English Nature and RSPB) are surprised and delighted by the results.

© *British Birds* 94: 606-608, December 2001

White Stork detained on 'spying' charge

Until now, the White Stork *Ciconia ciconia* has been widely stereotyped as a mere postal worker, delivering babies large and small. But now it stands accused of a more glamorous and subversive role: that of a spy. A White Stork fitted with a satellite transmitter in South Africa, and tracked as it moved north by researchers from the Avian Demography Unit (ADU) at Cape Town University, disappeared from radar screens over Burundi. The injured bird had, it transpired, been arrested!

'Saturn' was one of five storks satellite-tagged by ADU staff in December 2000, in a collaborative project with ornithologists from Germany and Belgium. Four of the five storks perished in February 2001, victims of the floods in Mozambique, but Saturn was captured by villagers in northeast Burundi after injuring a wing. On inspecting the stork more closely, the local people were intrigued by the suspicious-looking electronic device strapped to its body. Saturn was handed over to the police and taken into custody.

Prof. Les Underhill, of the ADU, was able to reassure the authorities that there was nothing sinister about Saturn's high-tech backpack. He remains hopeful that both the bird and the transmitter will eventually be returned unharmed.

The South African White Storks that Prof. Underhill and his colleagues are studying form an intriguing *breeding* population that was first discovered 70 years ago. The White Stork is a widespread visitor to Africa, but these migrants return to Europe and southwest Asia to breed. At the southernmost tip of Africa there is, however, a colony presently of five breeding pairs. The adults are resident, but the young birds undertake post-fledging dispersal, and the current research is designed to find out where the young go.

There are more details of Saturn's ill-fated trip on the BBC News website (at http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/africa/newsid_1588000/1588783.stm).

European Honey-buzzards tracked south

In addition to White Storks being stalked via satellite, European Honey-buzzards *Pernis apivorus* from the Scottish Highlands are now being tracked on the internet as part of a pioneering project to find out more about their migration to equatorial Africa. The Forestry Commission has joined forces with the Highland Foundation for Wildlife to trace the migration route and wintering sites of the small population of honey-buzzards which breeds in the Caledonian pine forest. Two chicks have been fitted with lightweight satellite transmitters, and their progress can be followed through two linked websites (www.forestry.gov.uk/birdlife and www.roydennis.org/ honeybuzzard.htm).

Kittiwakes on the Tyne

The farthest-inland breeding colony of Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* in the world is under threat from the continuing gentrification of Tyneside. Kittiwakes first colonised the window ledges of the Baltic Flour Mills in Gateshead, on the south bank of the River Tyne, more than 40 years ago. The nesting site is 16 km from the North Sea coast, and the gulls have become a familiar sight to customers thronging the new bars and restaurants across the river on the Newcastle quayside. The Kittiwakes took a liking also to the restored buildings on this (north) side of the river, and recently began nesting there, and on the iconic Tyne Bridge.

Tyneside's redevelopment, however, means that there is little tolerance of the Kittiwakes, their nests and the inevitable shower of droppings down below. The first blow came when the redundant Baltic Flour Mills, which closed in 1980, received Lottery funding for a complete refurbishment to provide the new home for BALTIC, the largest contemporary art gallery outside London. Consequently, the Kittiwakes' nest ledges were netted (outside the breeding season) to prevent the birds from returning. An innovative nesting tower was erected nearby, and 130 pairs bred on this new structure in 2000. But even the new tower was deemed intrusive by Gateshead worthies, with the result that it has been relocated farther downstream, away from the flagship arts development, which is due to open next spring.

Even worse, Newcastle City Council is now seeking to evict those individuals nesting on the north bank of the Tyne, by netting the Tyne Bridge. The bridge was colonised by Kittiwakes as recently as 1997, but it supported 82 nests in 2001. Northumberland and Tyneside Bird Club is lobbying the council in an attempt to stop the Kittiwakes being driven out. You can help by writing to express your objections to: Mr P. Fenwick, Enterprise, Environment and Culture Directorate, Newcastle City Council, Civic Centre, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8PD. Since Newcastle and Gateshead are bidding for the annual title of European Capital of Culture in 2008, protestors may care to point out that the cultural richness of the quaysides is undoubtedly enhanced by the presence of the Kittiwakes.

The fourth-shrike saga

As reported in *British Birds*, photographic evidence proved invaluable in the assessment of a recent 'first' for Britain, the Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* in West Sussex, in 1997 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 435-441). Now, the rapid sharing of images and information via the internet has been similarly instrumental in the identification of another major rarity, and, once again, after the bird concerned had disappeared.

The Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* on Bryher, Scilly, in September 2001, will, if accepted by the BBRC, be the fourth record for Britain and Ireland, and the third in three years (following individuals in Co. Kerry in November 1999 and on Fair Isle, Shetland, in October 2000). Originally reported as a Red-backed Shrike *L. collurio*, it was photographed by Marcus Lawson and Peter Simpson on 24th September. 'Digiscoped' images, obtained with the use of a digital camera and a conventional telescope, were posted on the *Surfbirds* website on 1st October. The photographers were already having doubts about the identification when visitors to the website expressed similar concerns. BBRC member Brian Small and Tim Worfolk, co-author of the Pica Press handbook *Shrikes*, both opined that the bird was, in fact, a Brown Shrike, and one of the images is reproduced here (plate 345).

You can see pictures of the shrike, and many other recent rarities 'digiscoped' by a new generation of bird-photographers, at http://www.surfbirds.com



Marcus Lawson

345. Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*, Bryher, Scilly, September 2001

African Bird Club in Africa

We have always found it slightly worrying that so many of the world's bird clubs and societies are based in the UK: BirdLife International, Neotropical Bird Club, Oriental Bird Club, Ornithological Society of the Middle East, West African Ornithological Society, World Owl Trust, and World Pheasant Association, to name but a few. This situation is easily explainable by reason of history, but just how do the residents of, for example, Kenya feel about the African Bird Club (ABC) being based in the UK and just how relevant is it to their local ornithology? It was, therefore, very pleasing to read in the latest *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* (vol. 8, no. 2) that the Club is planning significant moves towards making the ABC more truly African. Founded in 1993, the Club now has about 1,250 members dispersed among more than 60 countries, but only some 300 of these live in Africa. As part of several key objectives over the next five years, the ABC will be introducing various schemes and initiatives to bring Africa and the ABC closer together. We wish them well.

The African Bird Club can be contacted c/o BirdLife International, Wellbrook Court, Girton Road, Cambridge CB3 0NA (e-mail: info@africanbirdclub.org).

Proactive campaigners spread their net across Europe

Illegal hunting in Malta and Italy, a giant hydroelectric dam in Iceland and limestone-mining in Slovakia are just some of the threats to birds in Europe which are being tackled by the internet pressure group Proact. Proact is a growing coalition of birders worldwide which mounts a rapid-response campaign when birds and their habitats are threatened. The website was initially set up in 2000, to mobilise opposition to Italian MEP Michl Ebner's attempt to circumvent the EU Birds Directive by allowing individual nations the right to determine the duration of the hunting season for migratory birds in their own country. That campaign, which was successful, triggered an avalanche of e-mails which alerted other MEPs and the media to the outrage caused by the pro-hunting proposal. Sadly, the newly elected Italian premier Silvio Berlusconi, and his ministers, are now attempting to revive the hunting plan with legislation in the Italian Parliament.

Proact is presently campaigning against plans by Club Med for a holiday resort in Morocco, adjacent to the world's last remaining breeding colony of Bald Ibises *Geronticus eremita*, and Norsk Hydro's plans for a giant hydroelectric dam on the edge of Europe's largest glacier, Vatnajokul, in Iceland. The latter proposal would affect an area of 3,000 km², and breeding bird populations which include 3,800 pairs of Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus* and 700 pairs of Red-necked Phalaropes *Phalaropus lobatus*.

In addition to lobbying, Proact members also take more direct action. In September-October 2001, a group of Italian and German volunteers set up camp in the Brescia hills near Lake Garda, northern Italy. They courageously targeted the bird-hunters who were illegally trapping thousands of small birds, particularly finches (Fringillidae). By the end of its month in the 'bird camp', the Proact team had confiscated 10,000 bow traps and smaller numbers of spring traps and mist-nets. Italian forest guards arrested 30 poachers; information from the Proact volunteers resulted in ten of these arrests.

To find out more about the current campaigns, or to join the 300 birders already registered with Proact, visit the website: http://proaction.tripod.com

Reviews

INVENTAIRE DES OISEAUX DE FRANCE

By Philippe J. Dubois, Pierre le Maréchal, Georges Olioso & Pierre Yésou. Nathan, Paris, 2000. 400 pages; numerous line-drawings, histograms, and distribution maps. ISBN 2-09-260674-3. Hardback, £68.00.

This large-format, copiously illustrated and well-produced book is wholly in French, but, of course, the scientific names are given for each species. Two useful introductory texts cover, respectively, the history of ornithology in France, by Roger Cruon, and the evolution and history of the French avifauna, by Jacques Blondel. The bulk of the volume consists of individual accounts of the 512 species on the French List up to 1999, nearly 400 of which are regular visitors. The four main authors are well known in the French bird-watching community, and are largely responsible for the establishment of the magazine *Ornithos*.

The book summarises the ornithological data amassed in France since the publication of the previous detailed checklist, by Noël Mayaud in 1936, in the magazine *Alauda*. As such, it includes the results of two atlas surveys of breeding birds and one of wintering birds.

For each species, the text discusses systematics; general status and habitat; the annual cycle; breeding and wintering ranges; and population trends. The last topic is discussed in some depth wherever possible, giving details of the present breeding or wintering distribution, and whether numbers are declining, stable or increasing. Each account is accompanied by a colour illustration, sometimes by a histogram showing monthly or yearly occurrence, and, except for extreme rarities, by up to three distribution maps. About two-thirds of a page is devoted to each species, and rarities get their fair share, reflecting their interest to birdwatchers. Well-studied species, e.g. Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* or Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, occupy a whole page or more.

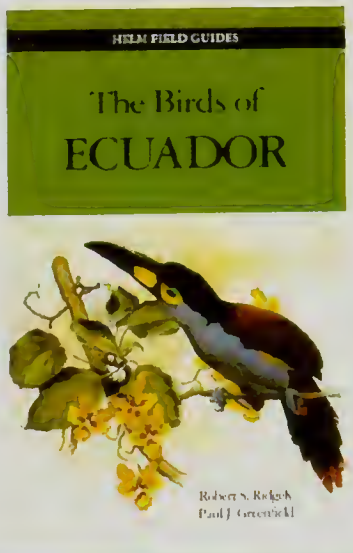
In such a monumental work, which is not cheap, but which is excellent value for money, a few blunders and omissions are inevitably found, but the total result is highly impressive. You will find a wealth of information here on a national avifauna which is still rich and varied. Appealing to birdwatchers of all persuasions, this book is essential if France is a potential holiday destination. The maps and histograms are self-explanatory, and the readable text provides an excellent opportunity to brush up your French!

Norbert Lefranc

THE BIRDS OF ECUADOR

By Robert S. Ridgely & Paul J. Greenfield. Christopher Helm, A & C Black, London, 2001. Volume 1: Status, Distribution and Taxonomy; 848 pages. ISBN 0-7136-6116-X. Volume 2: A Field Guide; 748 pages, 96 colour plates and 1,596 maps. ISBN 0-7136-6117-8. Paperback, £80.00 for both volumes (or £40.00 for Vol. 1 and £55.00 for Vol. 2 when bought individually).

The long, long wait is over! After more than a decade of hearing that a field guide to the birds of Ecuador was in preparation, it has finally been published. On learning that the work comes in two volumes, most people will probably applaud and assume that this means that the plates are in one volume, for use in the field, while the text and maps are in the other, for reference. Sadly, this is not the case. Volume 2, the 'field guide', contains not only the plates but also distribution maps, identification texts, and sections on habits and voice for each species. This runs to almost 1,000 pages, is more than 5 cm thick, and weighs in at more than 1.5 kg, which is hardly convenient. Volume 1, which is only slightly slimmer, contains lengthy introductory chapters and detailed accounts for each species, covering status, distribution, taxonomy, races and world range. So, after repeated requests over many years, from birders and authors alike, that publishers of field guides which cover large avifaunas produce these in two parts, so that we can have the plates separate and portable, we are still not getting there. This summer, in western Brazil, I have already seen the plates from one copy of volume 2 carefully sliced out and spiral-bound, and being used as a true 'field guide'. Publishers should get the message and do this for us.



Turning to the contents, most users will probably look at

the plates first. Neotropical aficionados have perhaps been spoilt by Guy Tudor's superb plates in *The Birds of South America*, and may be a little disappointed initially (as I was) by Greenfield's paintings. Having used them as my main reference for a recent four-week trip to northern Peru (90% of the birds which we saw there are included in the Ecuador guide), I must, however, admit that I ended up full of admiration for them. Plumage details are portrayed accurately and they can be relied upon for identification purposes. They are well designed, with little wasted space, yet avoid looking cluttered, and many are aesthetically pleasing.

As might be expected from such experienced authors, the field-guide text is excellent. After measurements, and a brief statement on habitat and distribution, details are given of plumages and other identification characters. A section which draws comparison with the likely confusion species follows. Common vocalisations are described under 'Voice', while the distribution maps are clearly reproduced and easy to use.

Volume 1 contains some very interesting introductory chapters, including 'Geography, Climate and Vegetation', 'Bird Migration in Ecuador', 'Ecuadorian Ornithology', 'Endemic Bird Areas', and 'Conservation'. The authors have not followed the 'new' Sibley & Monroe order, nor adopted the Phylogenetic Species Concept, but have been influenced by 'population-level differences' and have 'split' a number of species as a consequence. Birders who have visited Ecuador in the past can, therefore, expect some 'armchair ticks': for example, Tumbes Swift *Chaetura ocypetes* is now split from Short-tailed Swift *C. brachyura*, and Ecuadorian Trogon *Trogon mesurus* is split from Black-tailed Trogon *T. melanurus*. The bulk of this volume is taken up with the main accounts for each species, which outline status and distribution in considerable detail, together with many references. Where relevant, there is a discussion of subspecies, taxonomic treatment, alternative English names, and, finally, a brief description of the world range. For obvious reasons, this volume will be of interest primarily to those studying the birds of Ecuador, though the taxonomic comments will be of relevance to those using the book in adjacent countries as well.

In summary, *The Birds of Ecuador* is not quite what I had expected, but it is undoubtedly a first-class and scholarly work that provides a wealth of detailed information not only about the birds to be seen in Ecuador, but also on more than half of the species found in the whole of South America. It will prove invaluable both in Ecuador and in adjacent countries, and can be thoroughly recommended.

David Fisher

AFRICAN BIRD SOUNDS

Vol. 1: North Africa and Atlantic Islands (Sahara, Maghreb, Madeira, Canary Islands and Cape-Verde). Vol. 2: West and Central Africa. By Claude Chappuis. Société d'Etudes Ornithologiques de France, in collaboration with the British Library National Sound Archive, Paris, 2001. 15 CDs. Vol. 1 £36.00, Vol. 2 £75.00; both volumes combined £98.00.

This remarkably comprehensive collection of bird sounds is divided into two companion volumes. The first comprises four CDs covering the vocalisations of 423 species from the Western Palearctic region of North Africa, including the Sahara, Maghreb (Morocco-Tunisia), the Canary Islands, Madeira and the Cape Verde Islands. Volume 2 is a set of 11 CDs comprising a further 1,043 species from West and Central Africa.

Vocalisations of many Western Palearctic species are published here for the first time, including those of Barbary Falcon *Falco pelegrinoides*, Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*, Trocaz Pigeon *Columba trocaz*, Laurel Pigeon *C. junoniae*, Raso Lark *Alauda razae*, Berthelot's Pipit *Anthus berthelotii*, Canary Islands Stonechat *Saxicola dacotiae*, Cape Verde Warbler *Acrocephalus brevipennis* and Blue Chaffinch *Fringilla teydea*. Volume 2 also includes the first published recordings for a great many Afrotropical species. For the sake of completeness, most vagrants to the region are included, with the result that three species of diver *Gavia* and four species of auk (Alcidae) are included, although they are unlikely to be heard in North Africa. There are no announcements on the CDs, so that reference to the accompanying booklets is essential, and particular care must be taken over the track numbers, especially when there is more than one cut of a species on a particular track.

The booklet accompanying Volume 1 includes an introductory section in French and English, followed by the list of species and details of each recording, including the locality, circumstances and recordist (in French). The booklet accompanying Volume 2 is entirely in English, and also covers all the species from Volume 1. The introductory section is concise but thorough, and includes instructions on how to find each species on the CDs. This is best achieved by using the index, which gives each species an individual number. There is a thoughtful reminder that play-

back can be prejudicial to birds and that a cautious approach should be used, particularly with endangered species. Nomenclature and sequence are based on *The Birds of Africa* handbook. The species list goes into considerable detail for certain species or groups, including acoustic keys, notes on mimicry, discussions on regional variations etc. The text must be read carefully. For example, in the case of Richard's Pipit *A. novaeseelandiae*, there is a flight call of the subspecies *richardi* from Siberia, followed by a flight call recorded in Malawi and a song flight recorded in Kenya. The African forms of Richard's Pipit are often regarded as a separate species, *A. cinnamomens*.

This collection of recordings is a major update on the *Alauda* supplément sonore series of 11 vinyl discs, published between 1974 and 1981, which comprised 450 species. A number of errors in that series have been corrected, and a further 1,016 species have been added. The recordings are generally of excellent quality, the accompanying booklets are informative and well produced, and the two volumes are packaged attractively. Claude Chappuis and his 136 collaborators are to be congratulated on such a monumental achievement. These sets are essential for anyone with an interest in African birds. They will be of immense help to fieldworkers, particularly in forest areas, as well as giving a fascinating insight into the diversity of bird sounds in the region.

Iain Robertson

THE COMPLETE GARDEN BIRD BOOK: HOW TO IDENTIFY AND ATTRACT BIRDS TO YOUR GARDEN

By Mark Golley & Stephen Moss. Illustrated by David Daly. 2nd edition. New Holland, London, 2001. 176 pages; colour illustrations.
ISBN 1-84330-035-4.
Paperback, £9.99.

THE GARDEN BIRD YEAR: A SEASONAL GUIDE TO ENJOYING THE BIRDS IN YOUR GARDEN

By Roy Beddard. Illustrations by David Daly; photographs by David Cottridge. New Holland, London, 2001. 128 pages; 100 colour illustrations; 100 photographs.
ISBN 1-85974-655-1.
Hardback, £14.99.

This is a re-issue of a beginner's guide to birds (see *Brit. Birds* 89: 326) for which attracting birds into the garden, and identifying them, are the central themes. Attractive, two-page identification spreads for 70 species that might be seen in a garden context allow illustrator David Daly the scope to show familiar birds in a variety of poses, anticipating behaviour that may be observed in the garden environment.

It is a shame that this second edition is not up to date. Garden Bird Survey figures from the early/mid 1990s are quoted; Spotted Flycatchers *Muscicapa striata* are still portrayed as reasonably likely to occur in an average garden; while the section on feeding could do more to guide the reader through the extensive commercial bird-garden catalogues now available.



The book does, however, succeed admirably as an accessible guide to identifying birds at home and nearby. Another from the New Holland stable on garden birds, and the stunning photographs by David Cottridge, together with beautiful and accurate paintings by David Daly, ensure a pleasing browse. Some of the illustrations are familiar from *The Complete Garden Bird Book* (see left). A thoughtful layout produces a book that will, however, please both gardeners developing an interest in birds and birders wishing to attract more to their garden.

Almost half the book is comprised of the species accounts, 60 in all. Identification notes are very brief, but, by making clear the garden context for the species covered, and giving pointers to recent population trends, the text is accurate and enlightening for the beginner. For more experienced birdwatchers, the strength of the book is the season-by-season structure. This makes clear what the key aspects of garden improvement should be throughout the year, the emphasis being on feeding, providing water, encouraging breeding and deterring predators. Splendid overviews of the behaviour and movements of garden birds in different seasons ensure that a quick browse will also be an instructive one.

Tony Blake

Recent reports

Compiled by Barry Nightingale and Anthony McGeehan



Mike Malpass

346. Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*, Balvicar, Argyll, November 2001.

This summary of unchecked reports covers mid October to mid November 2001.

Snowy Egret *Egretta thula* Balvicar (Argyll), at least 4th-9th November, potentially the first for Britain. **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* Dungeness, 24th-26th October, then Pegwell Bay (both Kent), 27th October. **'Black Brant'** *Branta bernicla nigricans* One, possibly two, Strangford Lough (Co. Down), late October to mid November. **American Wigeon** *Anas americana* Sightings included eight in Ireland in mid/late October. **Redhead** *Aythya americana* Kenfig (Glamorgan), 7th-9th November. **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* Lough Money (Co. Down), 3rd-12th November. **Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* Spurn (East Yorkshire), 4th November. **Baillon's Crake** *Porzana pusilla* Maywick (Shetland), 18th-19th October. **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* Two, Ballycotton (Co. Cork), 21st October. **Long-billed Dowitcher** *Limnodromus scolopaceus* One remained at Belfast Lough (Co. Down), to 12th November. **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* Tacumshin (Co. Wexford), 11th November. **Elegant Tern** *Sterna elegans* Clew Bay (Co. Mayo), 19th October. **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* Tingwall (Orkney), one, possibly two, 24th October, then one 25th-26th October. **Whiskered Tern** *Chlidonias hybridus* Willen Lake (Buckinghamshire), 30th-31st



Iain H. Leach

347. White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus*, Hornsea Mere, East Yorkshire, October 2001.

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October, same, Stewartby Lake (Bedfordshire), 31st October, the first for Bedfordshire. **White-winged Black Tern** *Chlidonias leucopterus* Two, Lady's Island Lake (Co. Wexford), 29th October. **Snowy Owl** *Nyctea scandiaca* Felixstowe (Suffolk), 24th October to 9th November (ship-assisted). **Chimney Swift** *Chaetura pelagica* St Mary's (Scilly), 28th October, presumed same, St Martin's (Scilly), 29th October. **Pallid Swift** *Apus pallidus* Cudmore Grove (Essex), 18th October; Cromer (Norfolk), 20th October; Gribbin Head (Cornwall), 21st October; Marsden Quarry and Whitburn (Durham), 23rd-24th October; Filey Brigg (North Yorkshire), 24th October; Tynemouth (Tyne & Wear), 24th October; Dungeness, 31st October. **Red-rumped Swallow** *Hirundo daurica* Flamborough Head (East Yorkshire), 28th October; Spurn, 28th October; Eccles (Norfolk), 3rd November, presumed same, Winterton (Norfolk), 4th November. **Cliff Swallow** *Hirundo pyrrhonota* St Martin's, 26th-27th October, presumed same, St Mary's, 28th-30th October. **European Roller** *Coracias garrulus* Skokholm (Dyfed), 26th October. **Olive-backed Pipit** *Anthus hodgsoni* St Mary's, 21st October; Fair Isle (Shetland), 21st-26th October; Bressay (Shetland), 27th October. **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* St Mary's, 22nd-28th October. **Siberian Rubythroat** *Luscinia calliope* Male found dead, Bixter (Shetland), 25th October. **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** *Locustella certhiola* Fair Isle, 19th October. **Subalpine Warbler** *Sylvia cantillans* St Mary's, 19th-28th October; Wells Wood (Norfolk), 28th October to 1st November; Tresco (Scilly), 2nd-3rd November; Skokholm, 3rd November. **Arctic Warbler** *Phylloscopus borealis* Nanquidno (Cornwall), 20th-26th October. **Pallas's Leaf Warbler** *Phylloscopus proregulus* At least 12: Minsmere (Suffolk), 18th



Reston Kilgour

348. Red-throated Pipit *Anthus cervinus*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2001.



George Reszeter

349. Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2001.



Steve Young/Birdwatch

350. Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2001.

October; Holme (Norfolk), 18th-19th October; Egilsay (Orkney), 19th October; Drums (Northeast Scotland), 19th-21st October; Mizen Head (Co. Cork), 20th October; Ocraquoy (Shetland), 20th October; Sandwich Bay (Kent), 20th-21st October; South Gare (Cleveland), 21st October; Filey, 22nd-24th October; Fife Ness (Fife), 22nd-24th October; Landguard (Suffolk), 26th-27th October; Portland (Dorset), 29th-30th October. **Radde's Warbler** *Phylloscopus schwarzi* Tresco, 19th October; St Mary's, 19th October; two, west Cork, 21st October. **Dusky Warbler** *Phylloscopus fuscatus* Fetlar (Shetland), 19th October; Church Norton (West Sussex), 20th October; Budleigh Salterton (Devon), 20th October; Foveran (Northeast Scotland), 20th October; St Levan (Cornwall), 20th-28th October; Unst (Shetland), 21st October; Flamborough, 22nd October; Newbiggin (Northumberland), 22nd-23rd October; Fife Ness, 23rd October; Landguard, 23rd-28th October; Tresco, 3rd November; Sandwich Bay, 3rd November. **Isabelline Shrike** *Lanius isabellinus* Cotswold Water Park (Gloucestershire), 28th October. **Arctic Redpoll** *Carduelis hornemanni* Scatness (Shetland), 18th October. **Black-faced Bunting** *Emberiza spodocephala* Fair Isle, 20th-24th October. **Rustic Bunting** *Emberiza rustica* Cape Clear Island (Co. Cork), 19th-25th October. **Yellow-breasted Bunting** *Emberiza aureola* North Ronaldsay (Orkney), 21st October; Bressay, 26th October. **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx oryzivorus* Spurn, 27th October.

Daily Log: September

For many observatories, the largest movements of passerines recorded during September are often those of hirundines and Meadow Pipits *Anthus pratensis*. In addition, the month typically sees the counts of early migrants, such as Willow Warblers *Phylloscopus trochilus* and flycatchers *Muscicapa/Ficedula*, decline, as later visitors, such as Robins *Erithacus rubecula* and thrushes *Turdus*, appear in greater numbers.

During the first few days of September, good counts of **Yellow Wagtails** *Motacilla flava* were recorded at Dungeness (Kent), including 70 on 1st and 80 on 5th, along with **Goldfinches** *Carduelis carduelis* (which peaked at 170 there on 3rd) and **Linnets** *C. cannabina* (315 on 4th). Elsewhere, **'White' Wagtails** *M. alba alba* were on the move along the west coast, with 60 at Calf of Man (Isle of Man) and 35 at Walney (Cumbria) on 4th. No fewer than nine **Barred Warblers** *Sylvia nisoria* reached Fair Isle (Shetland) on 1st, while 63 **Willow Warblers** at the Calf was by far that site's largest concentration of warblers all month. Migration was at a standstill almost everywhere after these first few days, but a shift to easterly winds brought some reward for observers in the latter part of the month.

At Portland (Dorset), 100 **Yellow Wagtails** were reported on 17th-18th, with 50 **Northern Wheatears** *Oenanthe oenanthe* and 100 **Common Chiffchaffs** *P. collybita* on 18th, too. Seventy **'White' Wagtails**, accompanied by 24 **Grey Wagtails** *M. cinerea*, were at Walney on 17th, when 420 **Linnets** moved through Sandwich Bay (Kent). Fair Isle reported two **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** *Dendrocopos major* on 17th, the first records of a reasonable influx there, while other observatories to record the species this September included Portland and Walney, where it merits rarity status. A total of 350 **Linnets** was logged at Walney on 20th, while on 21st there were seven **Great Spotted Woodpeckers** at Holme (Norfolk), together with 30 **Common Redstarts** *Phoenicurus phoenicurus* and 30 **Garden Warblers** *S. borin*. **Common Chiffchaffs** were numerous along the south coast on 22nd, with



Mike McDonnell

351. Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*, St Mary's, Scilly, October 2001.



Bill Baston

352. Dusky Warbler *Phylloscopus fuscatus*, Landguard, Suffolk, October 2001.

50 at Portland and 80 at Dungeness (increasing to 100 there on the following day), while there were 100 **'White' Wagtails** at Portland and nine **Yellow-browed Warblers** *Phylloscopus inornatus* on Fair Isle on 22nd. Movements through Sandwich Bay on 23rd included 2,870 **Common Starlings** *Sturnus vulgaris* and 425 **Goldfinches**.

In general, however, the last week of September brought the best out of Britain's coastal migration watchpoints, and 25th was one of the best days of the month all the way along the east coast. Sixty **Jack Snipe** *Lymnocryptes minimus*, six **Richard's Pipits** *Anthus novaeseelandiae*, 180 **Northern Wheatears** and 20 **Blackcaps** *Sylvia atricapilla* on Fair Isle, plus another 200 **Northern Wheatears** on North Ronaldsay (Orkney), gave the Northern Isles a distinctly late-autumn feel, apparent to a lesser degree farther south. Fifty **Song Thrushes** *Turdus philomelos* and 50 **Goldcrests** *Regulus regulus* were counted at Filey (North Yorkshire), and 85 **Blackcaps** at Sandwich Bay, while Holme had an impressive and varied arrival of migrants, including eight **Great Spotted Woodpeckers**, 30 **Hedge Accentors** *Prunella modularis*, 50 **Robins**, 200 **Common Redstarts**, 200 **Song Thrushes** and 60 **Garden Warblers**. On the following day, Filey reported 200 **Robins** and 50 **Common Redstarts**, while 40 **Blackcaps**, 30 **Common Chiffchaffs** and 2,280 **Common Starlings** were logged at Sandwich Bay and, on the west coast, 70 **'White' Wagtails** and 660 **Linnets** at Walney. Filey reported 100 **Redwings** *T. iliacus* on 28th, when 45 **Robins** were recorded at Dungeness, but thrushes arrived in earnest farther north at the very end of the month. On 29th, 2,000 **Redwings** appeared on Fair Isle (increasing to 3,000 on 30th), joining seven **Great Spotted Woodpeckers**, 130 **Fieldfares** *T. pilaris* and 100 **Song Thrushes**, while 250 **Fieldfares** and 775 **Redwings** were counted on North Ronaldsay. There were also 100 **Blackbirds** *T. merula* at Filey that day, and 50 **Common Chiffchaffs** at Dungeness.

The above summary of unchecked news was supplied by the Bird Observatories Council's 'grapevine', courtesy of the British Trust for Ornithology



Steve Young/Birdwatch

353. Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola*, St Agnes, Scilly, October 2001.



Steve Cooper

354. Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus*, Lundy, Devon, October 2001.



Iain H. Leach

355. Bobolink *Dolichonyx oryzivorus*, Prawle Point, Devon, October 2001.

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